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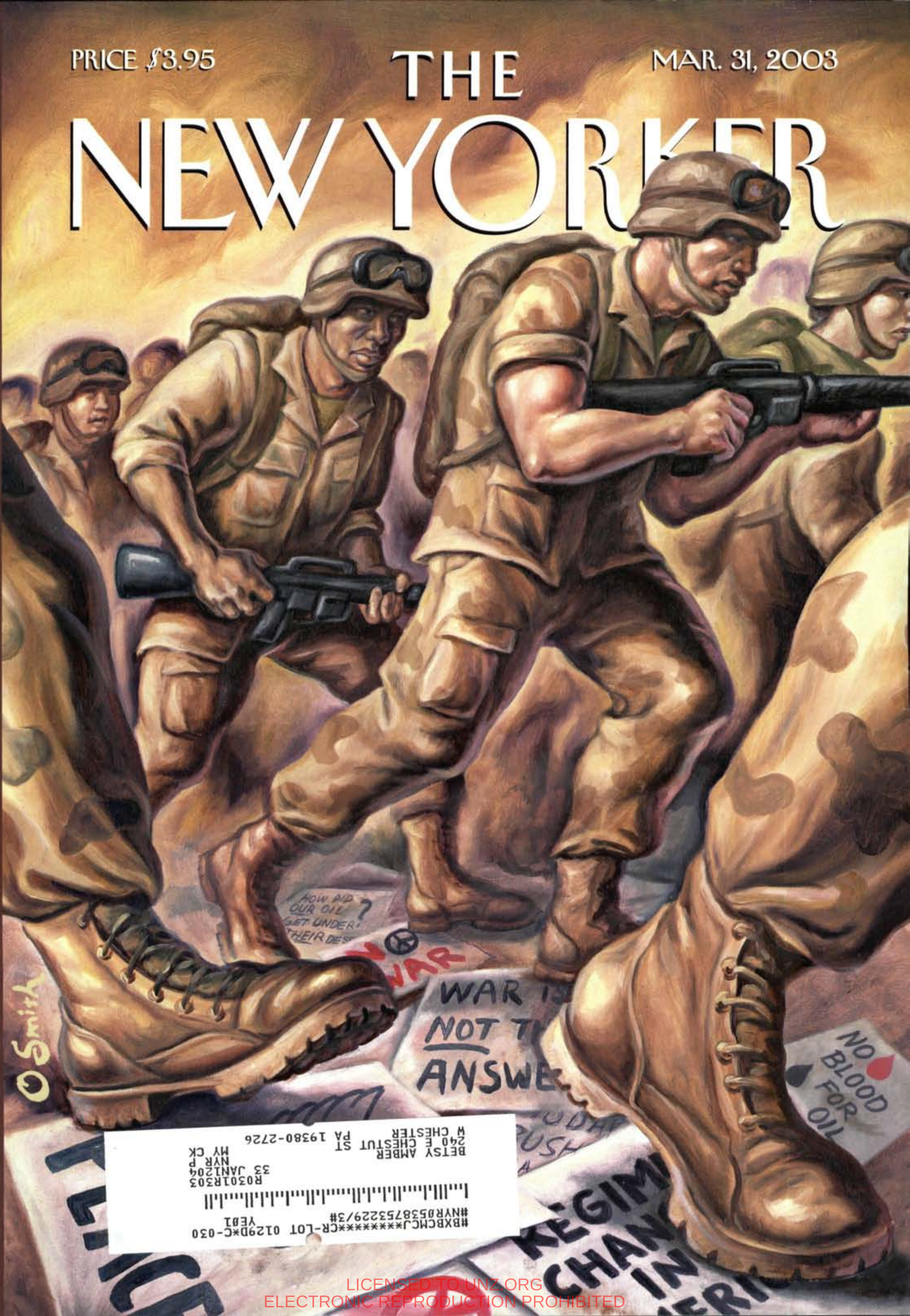

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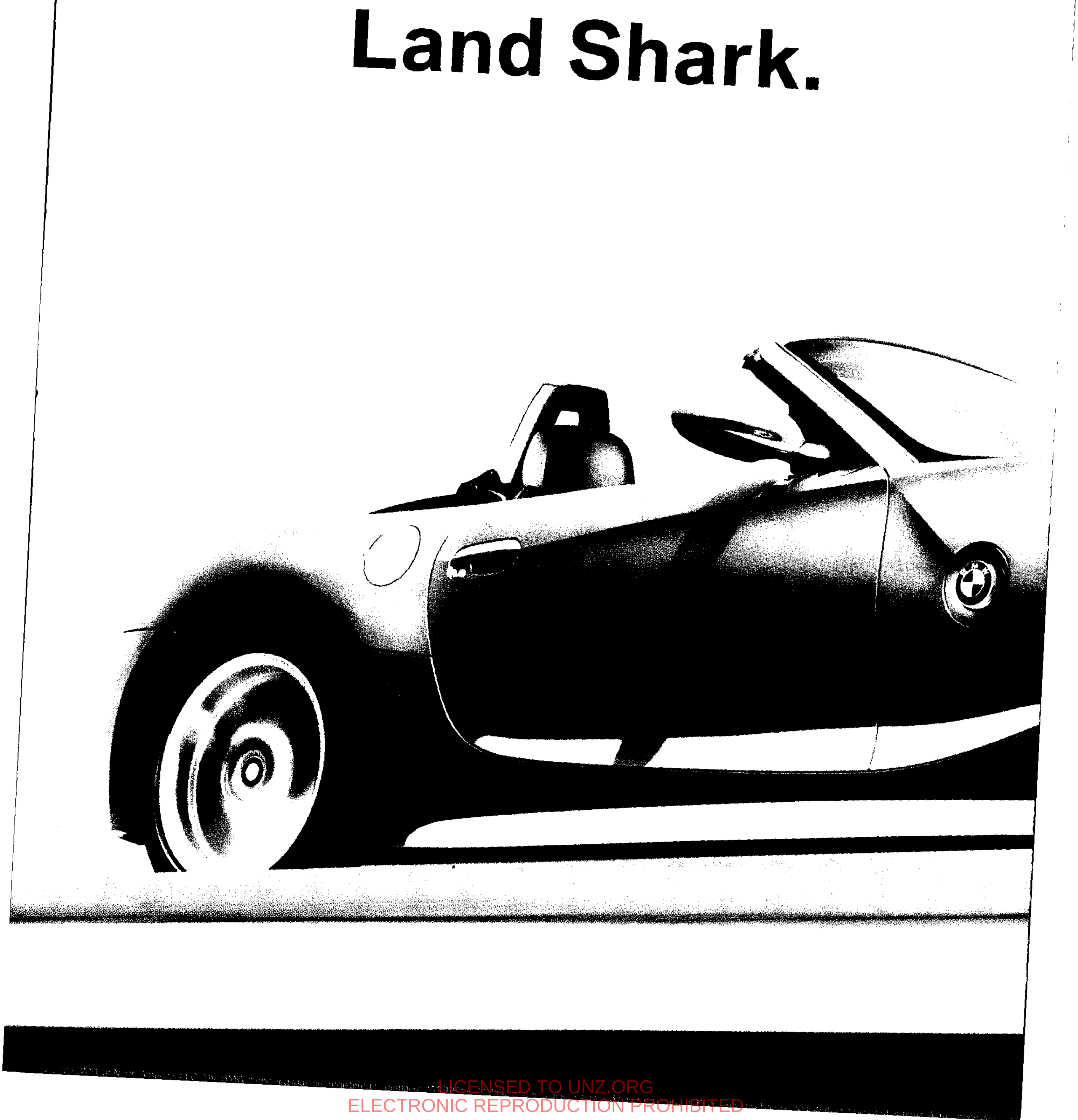
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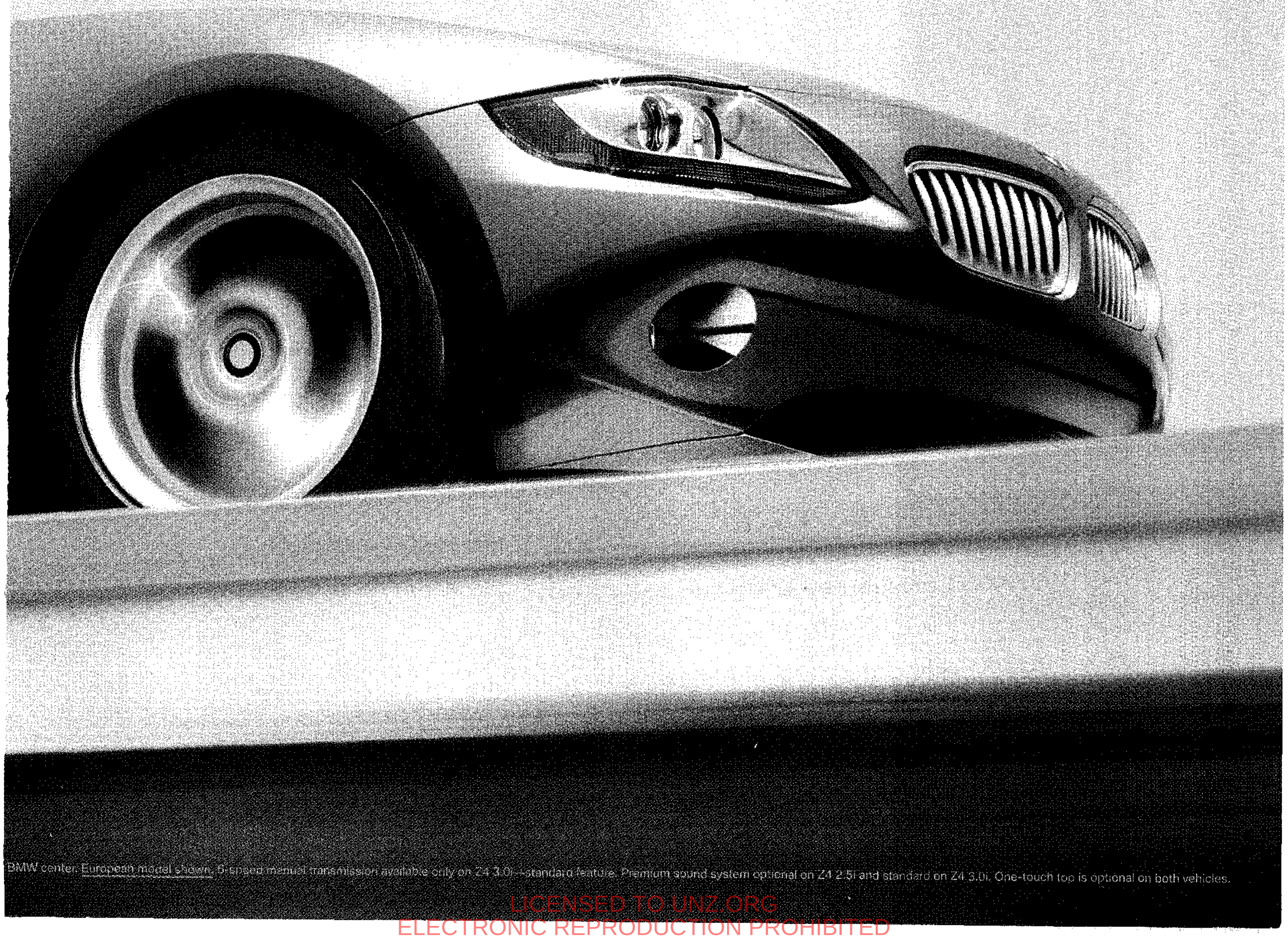

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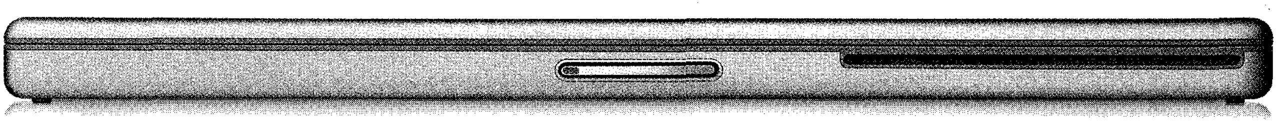

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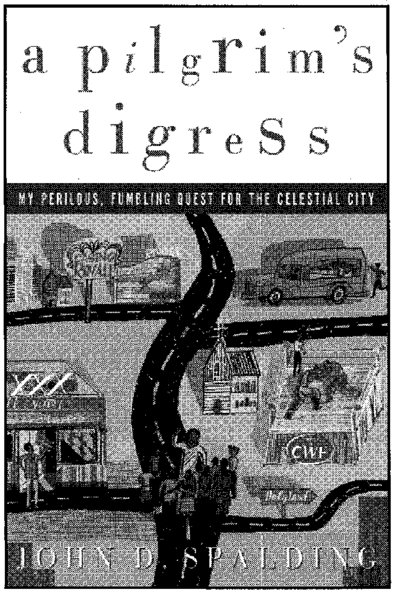
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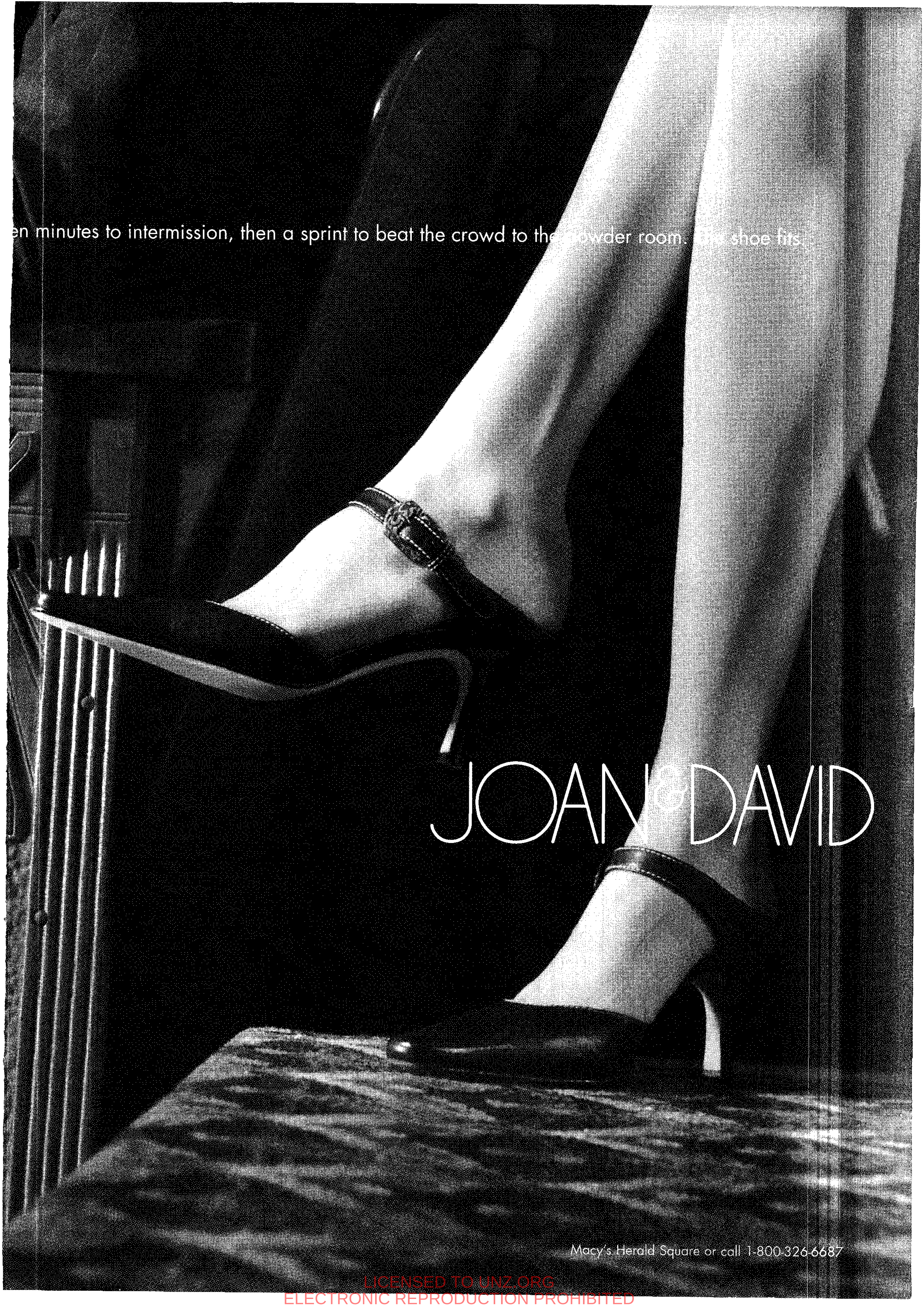
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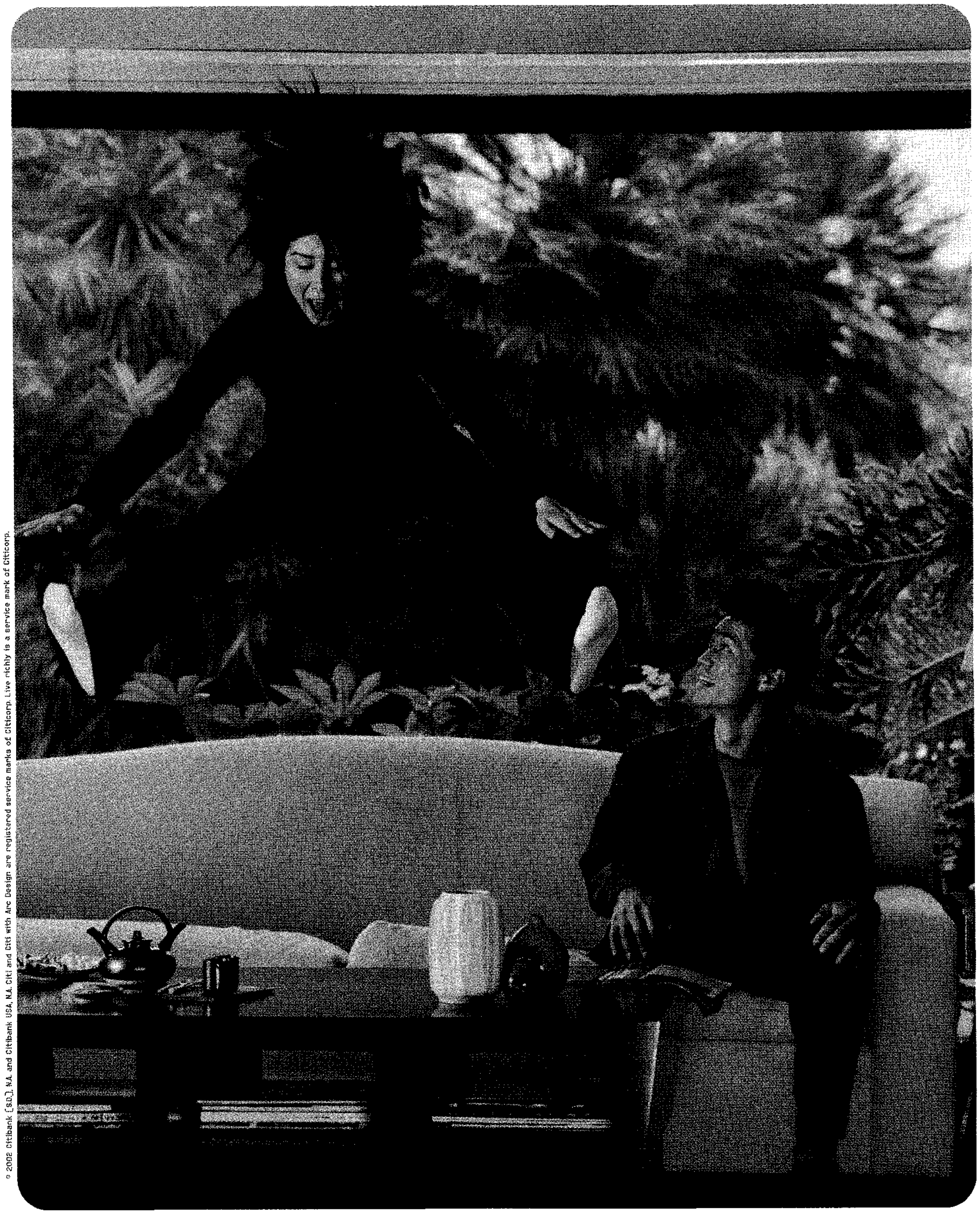

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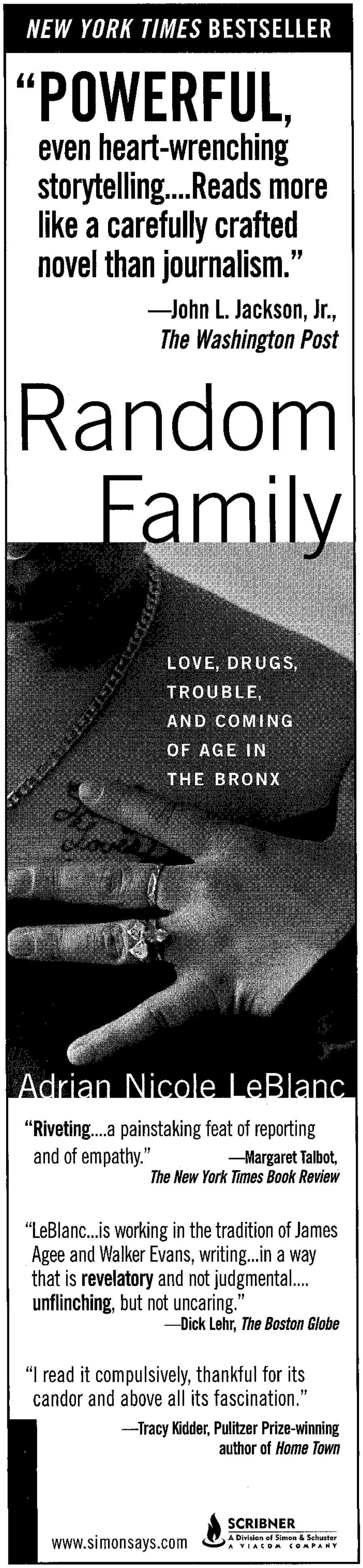
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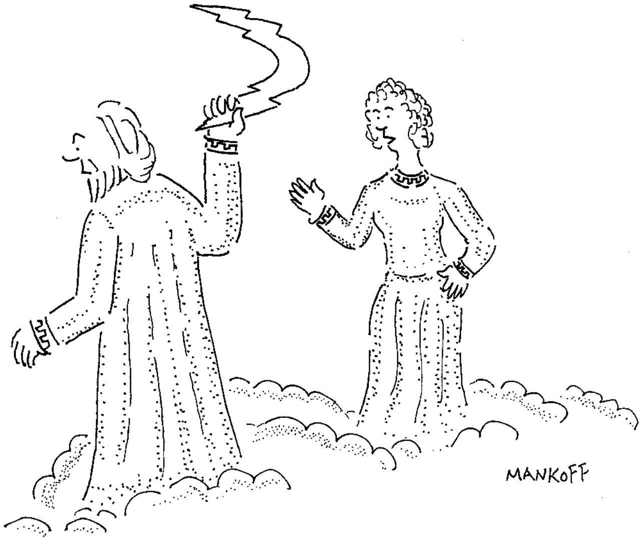

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THE MAIL

THE U.N.'S ROAD

Philip Gourevitch writes, in his Profile of Kofi Annan, "In the absence of any new discoveries of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, the Bush Administration has groped for an alternative casus belli: a link between Baghdad and Al Qaeda, Saddam's cruelty to his own people, democratization of the Middle East. But, like any legal system, the Security Council cannot sustain such extraneous arguments, and must focus on the case before it" ("The Optimist," March 3rd). The United Nations is many things, but a true legal system it is not. Its law is far from real law. However, the U.N. is, by design, a political system, and hence it is precisely the sort of place that should be considering those concerns which the Bush Administration raised. Indeed, as Gourevitch amply illustrates in reference to the U.N.'s role in Bosnia and in Rwanda, legalistic hairsplitting at the expense of the greater moral mission is just the kind of behavior that has got the U.N.—and Kofi Annan—in trouble in the past.

Emmett M. Hogan
Philadelphia, Pa.

While the United Nations is at a critical crossroads, as Gourevitch writes, so, too, is America. This country has a rich legacy of subordinating its own great power to the greater good of the international community. After the Second World War, the U.S. realized that it alone could not guarantee world peace and worked to strengthen international organizations such as the European Economic Community, NATO, and the U.N. President Harry Truman, in urging the Senate to ratify the U.N. Charter, in July, 1945, said, "This Charter points down the only road to enduring peace. There is no other." If America hopes to exert moral authority in the geopolitical affairs of another century, it must stay true to the ideals that made it a world leader in the first place.

Paul Wilcox
Mountain Lakes, N.J.

Gourevitch writes that U.N. peacekeeping in Bosnia, such as it was, was "much better than nothing." But the presence of peacekeepers without adequate defense prevented NATO from using air strikes to protect its designated safe areas. When NATO tried to break the siege of Bihac in 1994, the Serbs seized four hundred peacekeepers as hostages; NATO stopped its raids at European insistence. The Serbs repeated this tactic at Srebrenica the next summer: as soon as NATO began air strikes, the Serbs threatened thirty Dutch peacekeepers. The bombing was halted, and the killing of civilians proceeded unhindered. Four years later, Kofi Annan said in a report that the cynicism of the Serbs was "shocking." In truth, nothing about Srebrenica was surprising, not even the behavior of the peacekeepers in making it possible.

Joseph L. Ruby
Washington, D.C.

OIL AND ESCALADES

James Surowiecki writes, "Although the United States is by far the world's biggest consumer of oil, it uses much less oil per dollar of G.D.P. than it did thirty years ago, all those Cadillac Escalades notwithstanding" (The Talk of the Town, February 10th). But this statistic obscures a larger phenomenon. Since the Arab oil embargo, America has become a better conservator of energy. While real G.D.P. has grown by a hundred and thirty per cent, over-all energy consumption has grown by just thirty per cent. Oil imports are an exception: they have grown by eighty per cent. Meanwhile, since the mid-nineties, the fuel economy of the cars Americans drive has not improved at all. In that sense, the Escalades are indeed the point.

Dan Ackman
New York City

•

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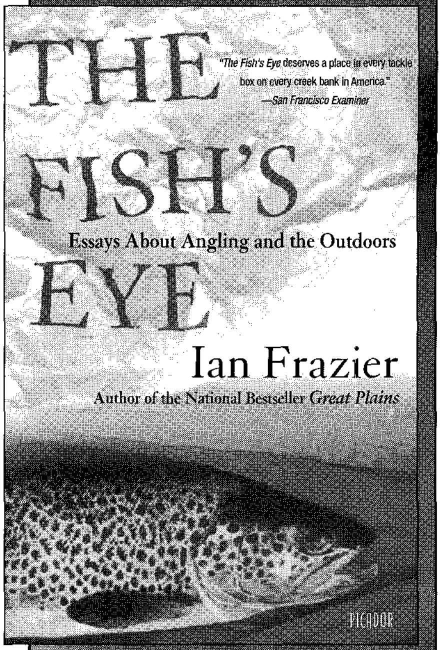
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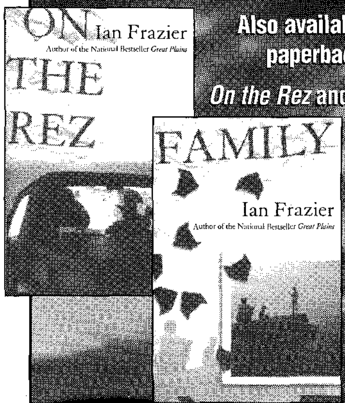
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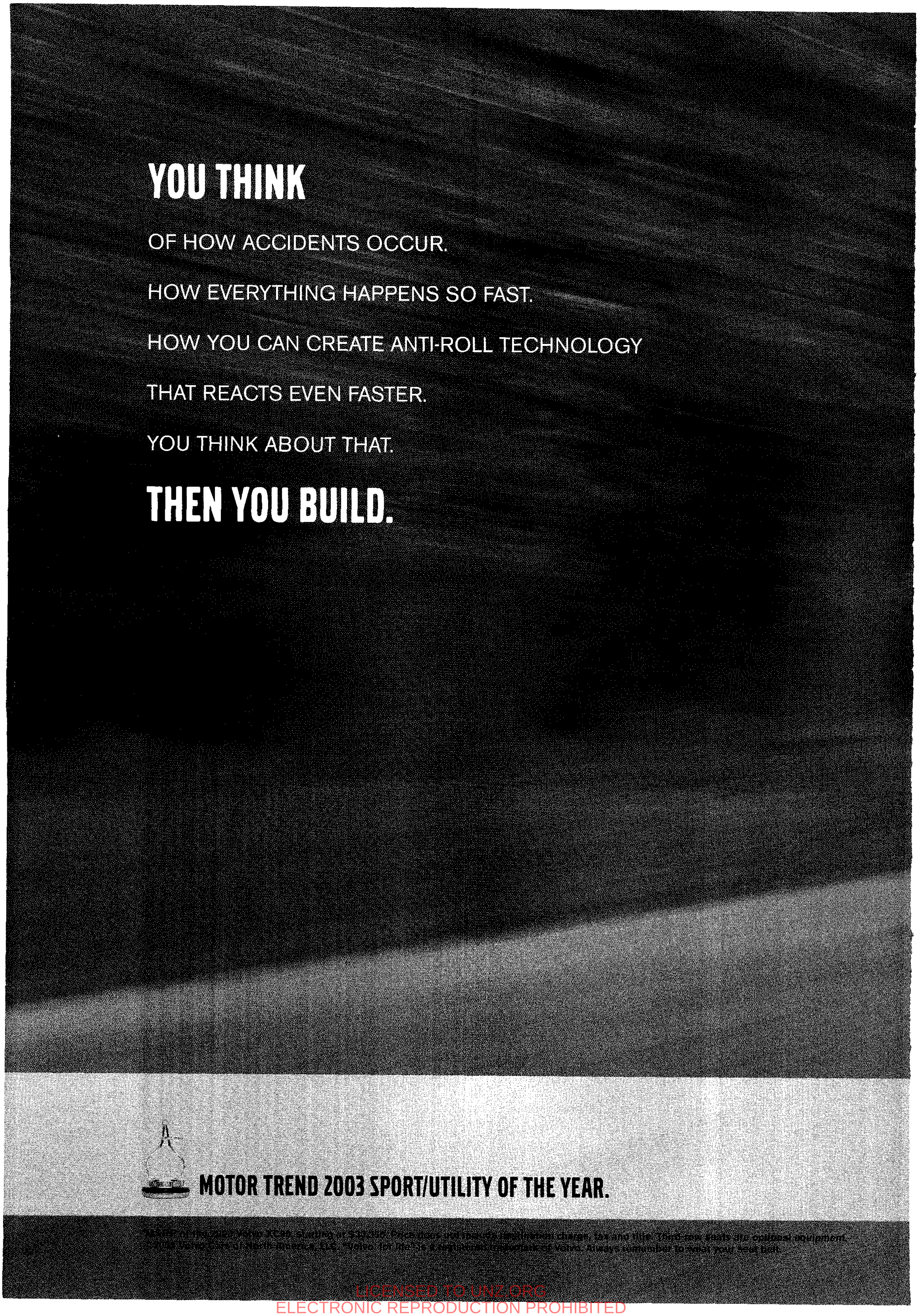

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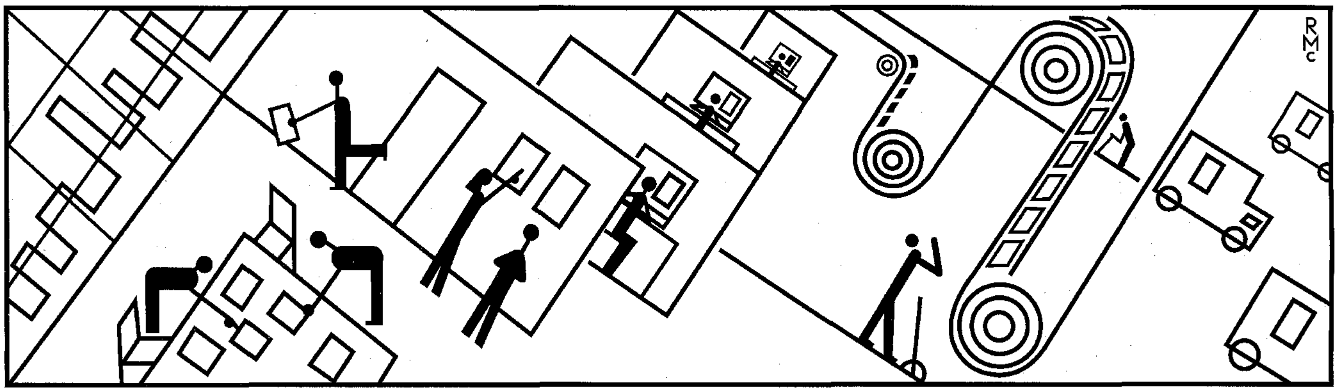

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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DREAM A LITTLE DREAM
The story of the life and times of the sixties group the Mamas and the Papas comes to the stage in a musical production directed by Randal Myler. One of the original Papas, Denny Doherty, leads the cast. A six-piece band plays and sings backup. Previews begin March 28. (Village, 158 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

ENCORES! AT CITY CENTER
The 1928 musical "The New Moon," with book and lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, Frank Mandel, and Laurence Schwab and music by Sigmund Romberg, is revived in a lightly staged production. Directed by Gary Griffin. March 27-30. (131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

GOLDA'S BALCONY
Tovah Feldshuh is Golda Meir in a new play about the Israeli leader, written by William Gibson ("The Miracle Worker") and presented by Manhattan Ensemble Theatre. Scott Schwartz directs. Opens March 26 at 7. (55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200.)

HANK WILLIAMS: LOST HIGHWAY
After a sold-out run at the Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, the popular musical biography of the country singer, which stars Jason Petty and is directed by Randal Myler, reopens at the Little Shubert on March 26 at 6:30. (422 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

LIFE (X) 3
A new comedy by Yasmina Reza ("Art") stars Helen Hunt and John Turturro and is directed by Matthew Warchus. In previews. Opens March 31 at 7. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 212-239-6200.)

NINE
The Roundabout Theatre Company presents a revival of the Tony Award-winning musical based on Fellini's "8½," performed by an all-star cast that includes Antonio Banderas, Laura Benanti, Jane Krakowski, Mary Stuart Masterson, and Chita Rivera. David Leveaux directs. In previews. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE PLAY WHAT I WROTE
Mike Nichols helped bring this hit play over from London, about one-half of a comedy duo who wants to dump his partner and put on his own play but first needs to cast a major actor to play his co-star. Starring Sean Foley and Hamish McColl as the team, with a secret roster of guest stars. Kenneth Branagh directs. In previews. Opens March 30 at 6:30. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

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TALKING HEADS
Six solo plays by Alan Bennett ("A Chip in the Sugar," "Miss Fozzard Finds Her Feet," "Bed Among the Lentils," and others) come to the Minetta Lane Theatre, in two alternating programs. Michael Engler directs. In previews. (18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 212-307-4100.)

URBAN COWBOY
A musical based on the 1980 film stars Matt Cavenaugh and Jenn Colella. Directed by Lonny Price and choreographed by Melinda Roy, with musical direction by Jason Robert Brown. Two previews on March 26. Opens March 27 at 6:45. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AVENUE Q
This new musical, with a book by Jeff Whitty, tells the story of a group of neighbors struggling to make it in New York City. Unlike another musical with a similar theme—"Rent"—this show doesn't deal with life-and-death issues, and not all of the neighbors are human: some are cloth puppets (the puppeteers are veterans of "Sesame Street"). This could sound like a recipe for juvenilia, but the end product is the most fun onstage so far this year, and it's definitely for grownups. The music and lyrics, by Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx, set subversive ideas to cheery tunes: various songs address the characters' occasional drunkenness, promiscuity, and racism with winking matter-of-factness, and in one number the child star Gary Coleman (played by the strong-voiced Natalie Venetia Belcon) turns up as a super on the block and sings about the value of providing Schadenfreude for others. The director, Jason Moore, guides the absurdity with precision. With a live band led by Gary Adler and puppets designed by Rick Lyon. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

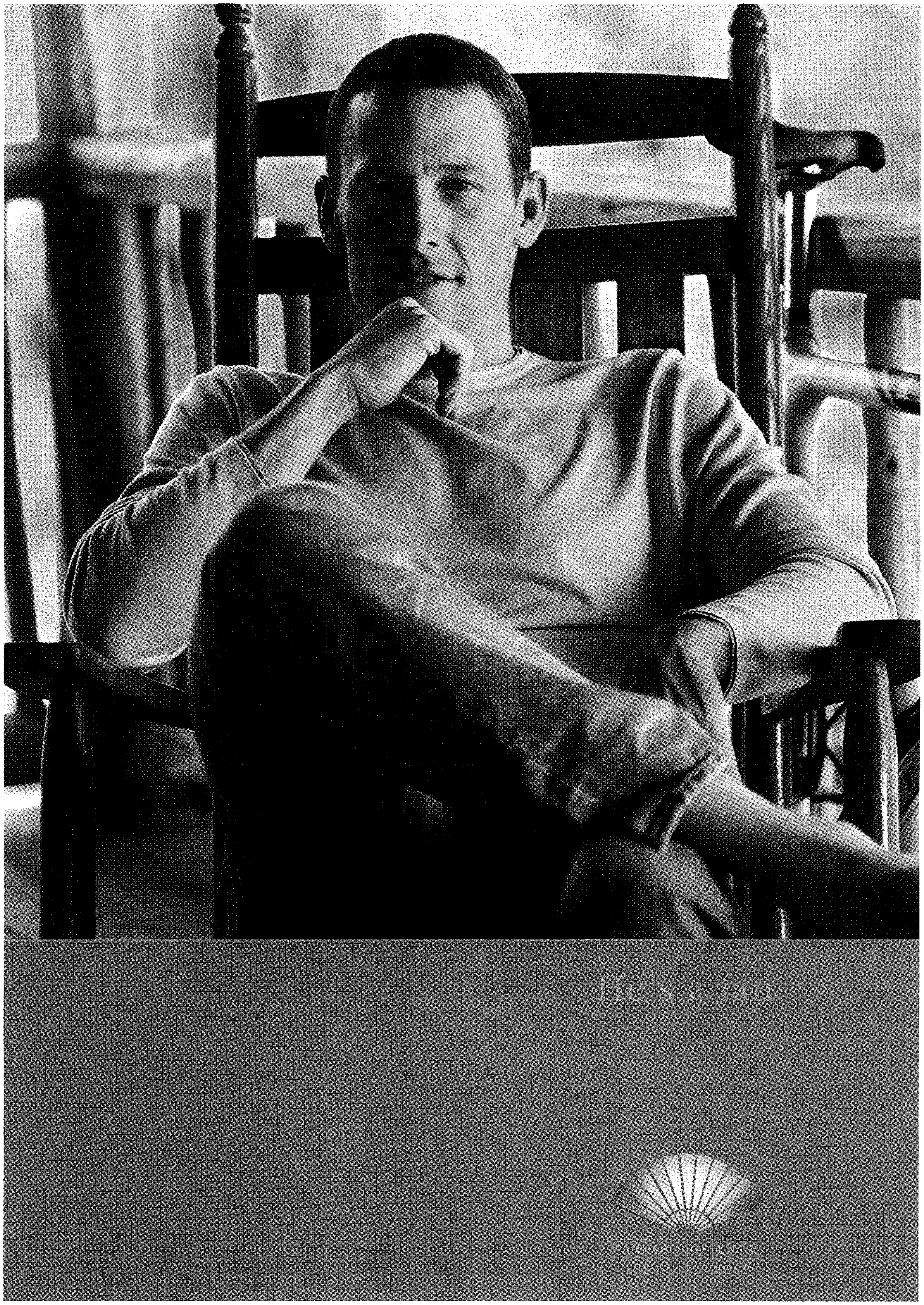
BARBRA'S WEDDING
If "Seinfeld" was a show about nothing, Daniel Stern's comedy is a play about nothing—although this nothing is really something. A neurotic out-of-work actor (John Pankow) spends the day in his modest Malibu bungalow kvetching at his wife (Julie White) as helicopters and names-in-bold descend on Barbra Streisand's nearby mansion for her wedding. Neil Patel sets the mood with a detail-perfect set—a middle-class California living room and kitchen whose walls shake when the whirlybirds fly over. Well directed by David Warren. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.)

THE BLACKS: A CLOWN SHOW
The blacks of the title are on trial for the murder of a white woman, but the underlying theme of Jean Genet's play isn't murder, it's the tension between blacks (the underclass) and whites (who represent authority). In the Classical Theatre of Harlem's staging, the whites who condescendingly judge the defendants—the Queen, the Judge, the Pope, and so on—are played by black actors in masks. As the two groups interact, they treat us to lyrical discourses on colonialism, sex myths, and the nature of power. This extraordinary production, which combines elements from minstrelsy, commedia dell'arte, and Chitlin Circuit routines, has been arrestingly directed by Christopher McElroen; on occasion, the actors single out members of the audience, involving them in the drama. (East Thirteenth Street Theatre, 136 E. 13th St. 212-206-1515. Closes April 6.)

BUICKS
Julian Sheppard's play gets off to a fast start with percussive engine revving and funky music mixed by the sound designer Darron L. West. After a terrific opening-scene sales pitch by the protagonist, Bill (Norbert Leo Butz), the owner of a Fresno car dealership, the truth about his life emerges: it's a wreck. Business is bad, and his wife (Olivia Birkelund) has just left him and taken the kids. In a brisk sequence of well-written scenes, Bill goes on the road with his Mexican assistant, Naranja (Lucia Brawley), to chase after her. Director Brian Kulick keeps up the speed, and Bill Buell tackles six key supporting roles, proving himself a formidable comedian. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 212-206-1515. Closes March 30.)

DON JUAN
Theatre for a New Audience closes its season with Christopher Hampton's translation of Molière's play, with Byron Jennings as Don Juan and John Christopher Jones as his servant, Sganarelle. Directed by Bartlett Sher. (Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-239-6200.)

FIFTH OF JULY
Rarely has dialogue flown as surely as it does in this 1978 play, the first in Lanford Wilson's trilogy about the unconventional Talleys of conventional Lebanon, Missouri. Michael Cerveris takes over from Robert Sean Leonard this week as Kenny Talley, paralyzed in the Vietnam War, whose terror of his future is more moving than his inability to walk, and Parker Posey plays Gwen, the woman married to the hunk John Landis (well played by David Harbour), whom Kenny and his sister, June, lusted after at Berkeley. Posey's Gwen is vital, mis-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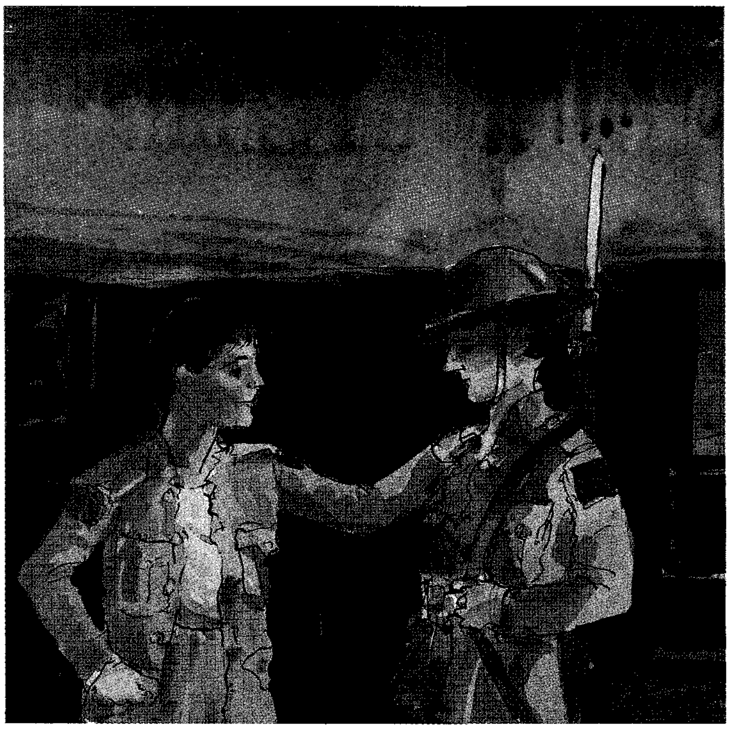
chievous, and surprising—a generous narcissist. The cast members work superbly together, fired by Jo Bonney's direction and Wilson's dynamic script. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529. Closes April 6.)

FOLEY

In this one-man show, George Foley IV (Andrew Bennett) relates the tale of the decline of his family of Irish Protestant gentleman farmers. Michael West's script offers a herky-jerky lyricism, a mix of wistful warmth and wicked humor that spares no one. Mr. Bennett, who plays not only himself but everyone else in the family, is dweebily compelling as "the end point of all that evolution and fruitcake." Directed by Annie Ryan and imported from the Corn Exchange, in Dublin. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 122nd St. 212-727-2737.)

FUCKING A

A new play by Suzan-Lori Parks bundles together abortion, murder, meat, the criminal-justice system, racism, class struggle, catchy (yet derivative) blues songs, and a made-up gynecological language called Talk. The result is a pungent concoction of uncertain power—like a witches' brew that tough kids whip up, hoping that enough foul ingredients will make something dangerous and supernaturally charged. S. Epatha Merkerson plays Hester Smith, an abortionist who has had a scarlet "A" branded above her left breast to indicate her trade. She washes blood off her metal implements and hoards coins to pay for her son's release from jail, unaware that he has become a homicidal maniac and is now on the loose—and being trailed by bounty hunters who call him Monster. As Hester's son, the hip-hop artist Mos Def shows impressive vitality and magnetism, and as her closest friend, Canary Mary—the mistress of the local mayor—Daphne Rubin-Vega shows a vivacious earthiness, but on the whole, this muddled parable lacks the potency to deliver the epic wallop the playwright intended. Directed by Michael Greif. (425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200. Closes April 6.)



Frank McGuinness's "Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme," at Lincoln Center.

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST

In the British director Kit Thacker's retooling of Shakespeare's romantic comedy about philosophy-spouting women and their sophistic male suitors, men and women switch roles: the women renounce male society and must be persuaded to change their minds. (Tribeca Playhouse, 111 Reade St. 212-206-1515.)

MY LIFE WITH ALBERTINE

You'd think it would be hard to sentimentalize Proust more than he sentimentalized himself—*mais non.* In this mawkish musical, the young Proust is played by the plump-cheeked, all-American Chad Kimball, who projects all the Gallic writerly aura of Doogie Howser. Brent Carver is more believable as the older Proust, but neither player looks remotely like the author. Kelli O'Hara is fine as the lusty, bi-curious Albertine, and her singing is nice, but her role is impossibly conceived. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

NONE OF THE ABOVE

New Georges presents a snappy new comedy by the playwright Jenny Lyn Bader about the risks people end up taking when they're trying to safeguard themselves. Jamie (Alison Pill) is a precocious Upper East Side teen whose low P.S.A.T. scores ("I'm creative, that's why I don't test well") prompt her father to strike a shady tutoring bargain with a gifted (and broke) graduate student named Clark (Kel O'Neill), whom he wants to coach his daughter to a perfect 1600 S.A.T. score—or else. With wit and candor, the two characters, brilliantly played to type by both actors, deftly dissect entitlement, intelligence, and isosceles triangles. Directed by Julie Kramer. (Ohio, 66 Wooster St. 212-206-1515. Closes April 5.)

OBSERVE THE SONS OF ULSTER MARCHING TOWARDS THE SOMME

On a beautiful set, built by Alexander Dodge and lit by Donald Holde, a platoon of Irish Protestant volunteers struggle with their pride, their fear, and their duty on the eve of one of the bloodiest battles of the First World War. The fine and versatile ensemble is well equipped to carry off Frank McGuinness's charged dialogues, and Justin Theroux shines as the lone toff in the bunch, and the lone survivor. Directed by Nicholas Martin. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

O JERUSALEM

A. R. Gurney's darkly comic drama humanizes the diplomatic failures that preceded 9/11 by making politics personal—indicting the American political psyche through close scrutiny of a weak, well-meaning governmental Everyman, Hartwell Clark. Clark (Stephen Rowe) has a charmer's ingratiating swagger: he's a Yalie and an oilman, married to a Texas heiress, and when George W. Bush becomes President, he lands a diplomatic post in the Administration. In the Middle East, Hartwell meets an old lover, Amira (played with glinting fervor by Rita Wolf), a Palestinian whose son is a member of Hamas. The cast delivers Gurney's briskly paced lines with humor and bite, and the play is strong when it is personal and satirical, but Gurney's audacious geopolitical premise—that the attacks were directly tied to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and possibly preventable—overreaches badly. "We are all in this thing together," Hartwell says, but his dilemmas don't really help us understand how we got into this thing in the first place, much less how to get out of it—but then that's not only a problem for playwrights. With strategic, quick-cut direction by Jim Simpson. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-226-2407.)

OUR LADY OF 121ST STREET

Stephen Adly Guirgis's play speaks gorgeously to our deracinated times. A group of fractured souls congregate at the Ortiz Funeral Home in Harlem to mourn Sister Rose—a nun who had taught most of them as children—but the wake turns into a vigil when Sister Rose is stolen from her casket. Guirgis's brilliantly drawn characters have been punished by life after their school days and exhausted by their grievances. Burnished to a shine by Philip Seymour Hoffman's deft direction, "Our Lady of 121st Street" is a fever chart of the heart's deceptions. (Reviewed in our issue of 10/14 & 21/02.) (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 212-307-4100.)

TEA AT FIVE

Matthew Lombardo's play about Katharine Hepburn is a theatrical homage: whether or not you like it will depend on the degree of your fascination with the leading lady herself. This one-woman show, performed by Kate Mulgrew, who bears an uncanny resemblance in face and voice to the star, is set at Hepburn's estate in Connecticut at two junctures in her career: in 1938, after a series of flops, as she waited to hear if she would be cast as Scarlett O'Hara, and in 1983, as she struggled with Parkinson's and considered whether to resume acting after a long hiatus. Mulgrew's impersonation is remarkable, although, in the first act, it can be disconcerting to watch her shapely form assume young Hepburn's rangy tomboy poses. Directed by John Tillinger. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.)

VINCENT IN BRIXTON

Nicholas Wright's play about the young Vincent Van Gogh's affair with his London landlady shows one complicated collision between genius and domestic order. As the artist, the Dutch actor Jochum ten Haaf gives a startling portrayal of the ugly, messy pursuit of love and the recklessness of self-invention. Even in his quiet moments—when he's listening or waiting for a response—he vibrates with a love of performance that merges with Vincent's love of painting. Under the masterly direction of Richard Eyre, Vincent undresses the soul of his older lover, Mrs. Loyer (Clare Higgins), and Higgins lets us see the striptease. (3/17/03) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

DANCE

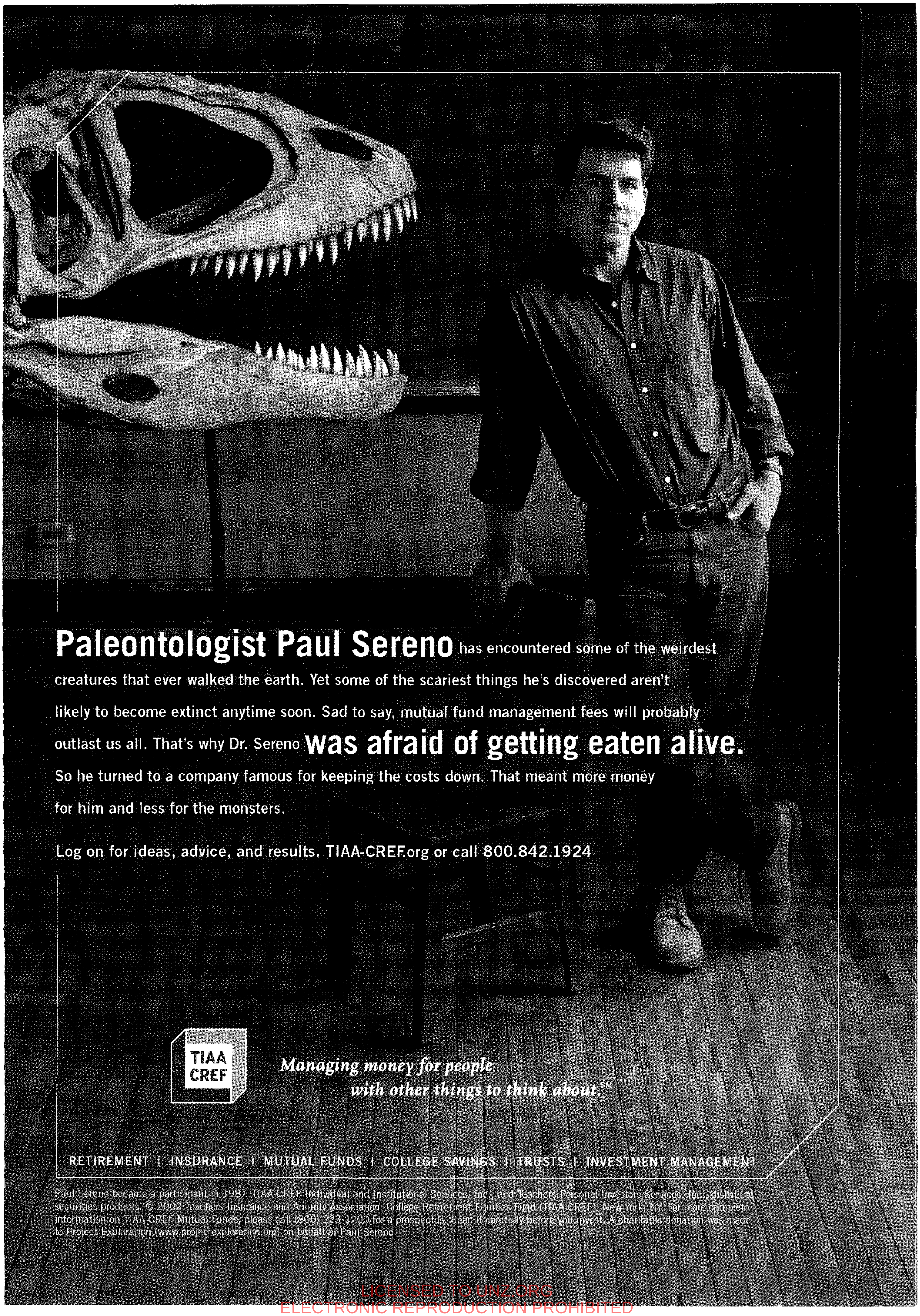
MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP

Program A includes Morris's new "Kolam," in which the company, in ankle bells, dances to a score composed and performed by Ethan Iverson and the great Indian tabla player Zakir Hussain. Also on the program is the solo "Serenade," for Morris. "In each of the five movements I use a different piece of equipment," he says. "A copper pipe, a fan, finger cymbals, castanets. Then I sit on a box." On Program B is Morris's centenary tribute to Richard Rodgers, set to the music for the 1936 ballet "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue." Morris called it "Resurrection," he says, "because the main girl accidentally gets shot, and then she reappears and shoots the guy. Then he comes back to life, and there's a big apotheosis." The dancers wear pajamas by Isaac Mizrahi. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Program A: March 25 and March 27-28 at 7:30. Program B: March 26 and March 29 at 7:30 and March 30 at 3.)

BALLET TECH

Eliot Feld's season at the Joyce continues, featuring new and repertory works that stress athleticism and the musculature of the body. In "Behold the Man," for example, a man who is naked but for a flesh-colored G-string and a web of white lights performs strenuous contortions to a New Agey score. This week includes one performance by Mikhail Baryshnikov of a brief new dance Feld created for him, called "Mr. XYZ"—a prop dance, à la Astaire, set to Jazz Age tunes sung by Leon Redbone. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. For full schedule, call 212-242-0800. Through April 13.)

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

**Paleontologist Paul Sereno** has encountered some of the weirdest creatures that ever walked the earth. Yet some of the scariest things he's discovered aren't likely to become extinct anytime soon. Sad to say, mutual fund management fees will probably outlast us all. That's why Dr. Sereno **was afraid of getting eaten alive.** So he turned to a company famous for keeping the costs down. That meant more money for him and less for the monsters.

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"SHADOWMANN: PART I"
The Bessie-winning choreographer Sarah Michelson has created a two-part "anti-epic" inspired by Bauhaus architecture that takes place in two different venues—Part I at the Kitchen and Part II at P.S. 122—in order to exploit the difference in scale of the two spaces. In Part I, Michelson fills the cavernous Kitchen with lines of dancers who step in severe trajectories, interrupted by soloists who break out of rank, fling out their hands, and speak English words in thick German accents. The dancers move with assertion—in seeming defiance of Michelson's directive to "deliver less with more action." With a pumping sound score by Mike Iveson, who also dances. In Part II, the dancers will deconstruct Part I amid a nest of lounge seats in P.S. 122's small downstairs room. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. March 27-29 and April 1 at 8. Through April 5. Part II to follow at P.S. 122, April 9-27.)

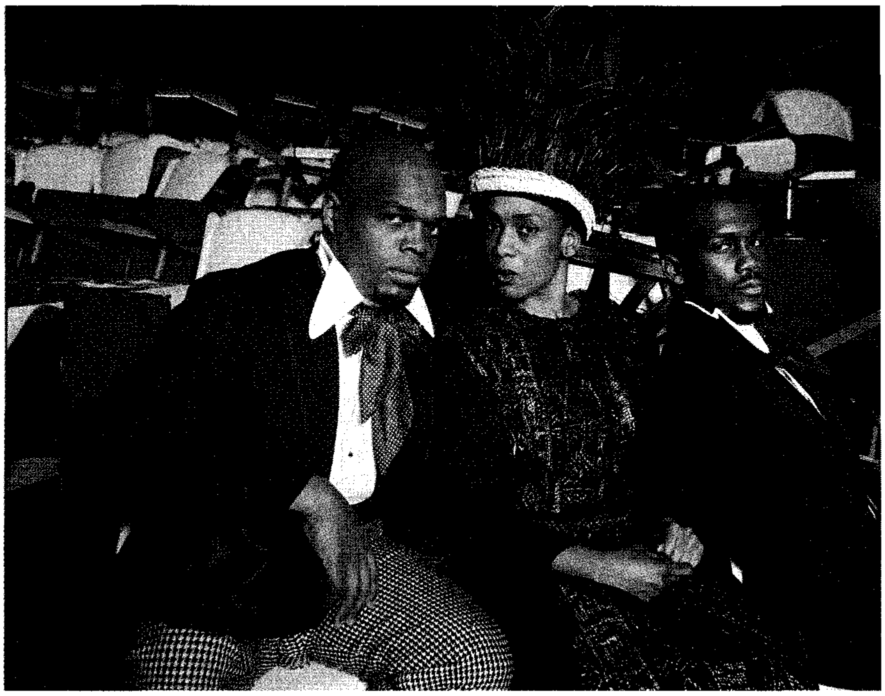
"BROWN BUTTERFLY"
In a multimedia homage to Muhammad Ali, elegant, powerful dancers jog in backward loops, landing lightly on their feet, making circuits around each other like human Spirographs. As they land, they punch the air in deliberate, heavy-fisted feints and exhale sibilant sounds—the "tss" that a boxer makes through his mouth guard as he exerts himself. The dancers, choreographed by Marlies Yearby, share a stage with video montages of Ali by Jonas Goldstein and with live musicians—including the trombonist Craig Harris, who composed the music and conceived the program. Harris's expressive score draws its sound from R&B, jazz, funk, and classic blues, melded with a contemporary London jungle influence to bring the history forward. (Aaron Davis Hall, City College, Convent Ave. at 134th St. 212-307-7171. March 25 and March 27-28 at 8, March 29 at 2 and 8, and March 30 at 3.)

FEAST
In J Mandle Performance's new work, set in an enormous windowed structure within a five-thousand-square-foot former stable on the Brooklyn waterfront, four dancers in geometric costumes enact scenes inspired by Plato's "Symposium." Inventively choreographed by Beppie Blankert. (The Stable, 16 Main St., Dumbo, Brooklyn. 718-246-7440. March 27-28 from 7 to 10 and March 29-30 from 4 to 7. Through April 6.)

SEÁN CURRAN COMPANY
The *amadinda*, an East African xylophone-like instrument, provides both the accompaniment and the title for Seán Curran's lively new work. Six dancers move in formation, working out puzzle-piece permutations to unusual time signatures, accenting their precision with gestures from Malaysian and Philippine folk dance. The evening includes a suite of other percussion-based pieces, including "Abstract Concrete," inspired by children's drawings stuck on a refrigerator, which are sure to please the tough, kid-heavy audience at the New Victory. (209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. March 27-28 at 7, March 29 at 2 and 7, and March 30 at noon and 5.)

DARRAH CARR DANCE
Darrah Carr, an Irish-American from Ohio, mixes the moves and conventions of traditional Irish step dancing with barefoot modern dance. In her show at the Merce Cunningham Studio, Carr and her all-female company perform one repertory piece and one première, "Mélange 445," which celebrates cultural diversity and includes banjo music by Béla Fleck, zydeco, and songs by the French-Canadian band La Bottine Souriante. The piece begins with the sound of heels stamping rhythmically in the dark and gradually brightens as the color green shows up—first on the dancers' cleverly constructed costumes, then on wooden boxes that unfold into chairs, which the five dancers sit on and use as platforms to assist their dancing and tapping. (55 Bethune St. 212-803-5181. March 28 at 9 and March 29-30 at 8.)

"THE ALICE-IN-WONDERLAND FOLLIES"
Keith Michael has conceived and choreographed an hour-long ballet-and-modern-dance collage of scenes from Lewis Carroll's tales for New York Theatre Ballet. Set in 1915, to such period-appropriate songs as "The Humpty Dumpty Rag," "The Glow Worm," and Debussy's "La Plus Que Lente," the production features costumes by the Metropolitan Opera's Sylvia Tallsohn Nolan. With Christina Paolucci as Alice, Terrence Duncan as the White Rabbit, Ursula Prenzau as the Queen of Hearts, and children from Ballet School New York as self-propelling teacups. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 212-307-4100. March 29-30 at 11 A.M., 1, and 3:30.)


Ty Jones, Robin Walker, and J. Kyle Manzay in "The Blacks: A Clown Show."

LISA KERESZI

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

"SINGERS OVER MANHATTAN"
An imposing drummer, and, when given the chance, a fine singer, **Grady Tate** trades in his sticks for a microphone at this Jazz at Lincoln Center program. The vocalist **Lizz Wright** shares the bill. (Kaplan Penthouse, Rose Building, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. March 27-29 at 8.)

ZWAN
Having disbanded his wildly successful Smashing Pumpkins in 2000, the feisty alternative icon Billy Corgan reunited with the Pumpkins drummer Jimmy Chamberlin, recruited a couple of indie-rock luminaries, including a svelte bass player named Paz Lenchantin, from the band A Perfect Circle, and formed this supergroup. Together they explore Corgan's fixation with burly psychedelic rock, complete with disconcertingly prog leanings. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 212-307-7171. March 28 at 6:45.)

THE NEW YORK POPS
Skitch Henderson and company are joined by the father-and-son guitarists Bucky and John Pizzarelli. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. March 28 at 8.)

"HIP HOP KHASENE"
No one is about to label **David Krakauer** a purist. This superb clarinettist may have the klezmer strains of his forefathers deep in his bones, but he's not stuck in the past. Calling on the violinist **Sophie Solomon** and **DJ Socalled** to further skew the New World mix, Krakauer and company reinterpret an Ashkenazi wedding suite. (Center for Jewish History, 15 W. 16th St. 917-606-8200. March 29 at 8.)

DAN ZANES
Formerly of the eighties alternative group the Del Fuegos, Zanes is a wafer-thin rock-and-roller who who has been enjoying a career renaissance since taking aim at the preschool set about three years ago. His family-friendly albums are full of durable originals and such hipster guests as Lou Reed, Suzanne Vega, and Sheryl Crow. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. March 29 at 1 and 4.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
March 29 at 8: The Tuaregs from Mali who make up the ensemble **Tartit** play instruments of their nomadic ancestry. The *imzad* (fiddle) and *tinde* (drum) are made from portable tools—a gourd and a mortar, respectively, which can be used for more than making music. The group's other dominant instruments are their own voices and bodies: the women's plaintive vocalizing and slow hand clapping are punctuated by the occasional high-pitched wail. This is the group's first New York City appearance. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. For more information, call 212-545-7536.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—March 26: The anguished Omaha-based band **Cursive** has a heavy rhythm section and a driving approach that keep it out of the sinkholes of excessive introspection. March 29-30: One of the smartest and sharpest punk-folk singers around, **Dan Bern** combines the lyrical overkill of a young Dylan with a slightly more romantic world view. He'll be performing songs from his forthcoming album, "Fleeting Days."

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—March 28: The unlikeliest rock prodigy to seize the spotlight, the potty-mouthed enfant terrible **Kelly Osbourne** brings her lightweight brat pop to town. With **Har Mar Superstar**, a flaccid and balding Minnesota native who has made a name for himself crooning slow-burn R. & B. songs in his underwear. April 1: **Concrete Blonde**, a trio dating back to the eighties, is led by the smoky-voiced front man Johnette Napolitano, whose husky tones exude both punky grit and soulful sweetness. With **Twinemen**, the Boston-based band that rose from the ashes of Morphine.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—March 26: The Brazilian percussionist **Cyro Baptista** stirs up a storm with his spellbinding ensemble Beat the Donkey.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—March 28: The vocalist and songwriter Amy Linton, of the San Francisco-area group the **Aislers Set**, is a nostalgist of the first rank: her voice is recorded with enough dreamy effects to impress Phil Spector, and the band's new album, "How I Learned to Write Backwards," is built upon the charmingly blatant use of Motown melodies.

MAKOR
35 W. 67th St. (212-601-1000)—March 27: **Peter Case**, a confident and intelligent songwriter, uses time-tested country-blues and folk traditions to convey his own unique vision.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—March 28: **Bettie Serveert**, a quartet from Amsterdam, plays deeply satisfying rock with a lean, let's-make-a-record-in-a-day sound. They're touring in support of their new recording, "Log 22." With the honking saxophones, rocking guitars, and loops and samples of **New Wet Kojak**. March 30-31: **Turbonegro**, Norway's hilariously ribald saviors of rock and roll, performs lurid music that's equal parts garage punk, dark glam-metal pageantry, and sleazy omnisexual hedonism. With such songs as "Rendezvous with Anus" and "Midnight NAMBLA," Turbonegro's joyously offensive oeuvre may not be for everyone, but there's no denying its appeal.

SIN-É
150 Attorney St. (212-388-0077)—March 28: **Barbez**, a local band fleshed out by a theremin player who smokes cigarettes and a full-throated Russian singer who comes across like Joan of Arc with a sense of humor. With **Melomane's** expansive chamber pop and **Dao Son Four**.

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—March 28: The front-porch ballads and lilting, whimsical waltzes of **Clem Snide**.

219 FLAMINGO
219 Second Ave., between 13th and 14th Sts. (212-533-2860)—March 29: The local goth revivalists **Judith**, the Philadelphia-and-New York-based post-punks **Plastic Eaters**, and the Boston garage rockers **Downbeat 5** keep the kids animated at the weekly "Satisfaction" rock-and-roll party.

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND
130 W. 3rd St. (212-777-7745)—March 28: The roots-rocker **Edwin McCain**—a fellow-townsman of Charleston's favorite sons, Hootie & the Blowfish—stops by with songs from his latest album, "The Austin Sessions."

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Through March 30: The lite-tropical jazz of **Gato Barbieri's** albums of the past few decades may not endear him to those enamored with his slashing free-jazz improvisations of the sixties or his early-seventies Argentine fusion work, but the tenor saxophonist maintains a suave and sensuous tone that provides its own rewards.

CARLYLE HOTEL
The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through March 29, a tribute to Harold Arlen featuring the vocalist **Jane Monheit**. On Mondays the café is home to **Woody Allen** and the **Eddie Davis New Orleans Jazz Band**. ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Loston Harris** is in attendance.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Through March 29: The songwriter extraordinaire **Jimmy Webb** and the husband-and-wife vocalists **Marilyn McCoo** and **Billy Davis, Jr.**, go back a long way: in 1967, as members of the 5th Dimension, McCoo and Davis scored big with Webb's Grammy-winning "Up, Up and Away."

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Through March 30: **Biréli Lagrène** has been channelling the spirit of the remarkable guitarist Django Reinhardt since he was a child prodigy. He's indulged in some unpleasant fusion forays in the past, but his Gypsy Project will be pure Django-soaked swing, sure to make the blood boil. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul**.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Through March 30: The trumpeter **Dave Douglas** proves he's got a band for every day of the week and more, at a momentous fortieth-birthday celebration featuring ten different ensembles. No new-jazz figure is more difficult to pin down stylistically or more open to diversity; from chamber jazz to techno and points in between, Douglas is fighting the good fight to de-Balkanize the music, with visionary results. March 25: The Tiny Bell trio and Four in One. March 26: Parallel Worlds, Witness, and Alloy. March 27: Charms of the Night Sky and El Trilogy Ensemble. March 28: The Dave Douglas Sextet. March 29: The Dave Douglas New Quintet. March 30: The Dave Douglas Septet. Dining.

SMOKE
2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (212-864-6662)—March 28-29: You'll know that jazz is truly defunct when feisty young trumpeters stop sprouting up at regular intervals, but that hasn't happened yet. **Jeremy Pelt's** been apprenticing around town with impressive results; here he leads his own sextet to celebrate the release of his new album, "Insight."

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through March 30: The **Eric Alexander** quintet. Alexander means business. This rough-and-ready tenor saxophonist draws on the Chicago horn tradition of his home town, channelling the energy, authority, and tonal girth of players like Johnny Griffin and Gene Ammons, without aping their styles. You don't go to hear Alexander expecting innovation or experimentation: basic hard bop is his strength. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—"**Manet/Velázquez: The French Taste for Spanish Painting**," a ravishing and keenly illuminating show, marshals great paintings to demonstrate a miracle in art history: the rebirth of Spanish Baroque painting in nineteenth-century Paris, brought about by Édouard Manet. It was as electrifying a development in its way as the Renaissance rediscovery of antiquity. Manet's appropriation of Velázquez's crystalline, rhetorical realism transformed French painting and, beyond that, set an example of stylistic resourcefulness that has informed artistic innovation ever since. At one end of its two-century leap, the show is augmented with works by Zurbarán, Murillo, and other Spaniards, and, at the other, by relevant figures from Delacroix to Sargent. But the summit meeting of Velázquez and Manet dominates. Saying that this show is greater than the sum of its parts is saying a mouthful, since the parts give as much pleasure as a person can stand. Through June 8. ♦ A mid-career retrospective of the photographs and video portraits of the German photographer Thomas Struth. Through May 18. ♦ "**Leonardo da Vinci, Master Draftsman**" surveys more than a hundred drawings by the Renaissance man. Through March 30. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—Even what's wrong with "**Matisse Picasso**," the magnificent show that deploys a hundred and thirty-three works by the twin godheads of modern painting, is revelatory. It is a double-barrelled blast of an exhibition with a popgun thesis: that Picasso and Matisse goaded and influenced each other. So do most artistic contemporaries. In any case, trying to absorb fine curatorial points

BOOK CURRENTS
Men of Substance

TONY MILLIONAIRE

"This is the doctrine of the true church on the subject of opium," Thomas De Quincey wrote, "of which church I acknowledge myself to be the only member." Many lonely worshippers congregate in **UNDER THE INFLUENCE: THE LITERATURE OF ADDICTION**, an anthology from Modern Library edited by Rebecca Shannonhouse that collects examples of almost two centuries of drug literature—from De Quincey's early-eighteenth-century memoir, "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater," to the anonymous 2001 *Granta* essay "Confessions of a Middle-Aged Ecstasy Eater." Drugs may lie at the book's heart, but compulsions related to gambling, food, and sex are also represented.

Missing from the collection is one of De Quincey's most devoted readers and a fellow opium fiend, Charles Baudelaire, who counselled readers to be drunk continually, "on wine, on poetry, or on virtue, as you wish." But he also thought drugs were a perversion of man's taste for the infinite and that great minds could furnish their own intoxicants. In **ON WINE AND HASHISH** (Hesperus), translated from the French by Andrew Brown, Baudelaire argues that the great poets can "by the pure and free exercise of their will reach a state in which they are at once cause and effect, subject and object, hypnotist and sleepwalker."

In **SAYING YES: IN DEFENSE OF DRUG USE** (Tarcher/Putnam), Jacob Sullum dismantles the antidrug messages—the comic figure of the slothful pothead, the spectre of the acid flashback. Sullum believes that the "silent majority" of illegal drug users indulge only moderately while still leading successful, productive lives. Once this group begins to speak up, he hopes, the myths of the drug wars "will be impossible to sustain."

—*Kate Taylor*

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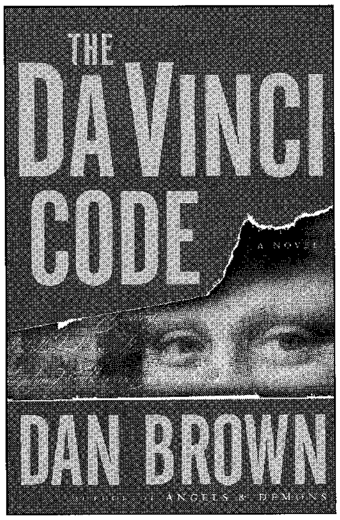

Jeff Azbill,
Davis-Kidd Booksellers,
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"This is one of those rare books that comes along and makes you question everything you thought you knew about religion, art, and what you were taught in school. It's fast-paced, enthralling, and simply impossible to put down."

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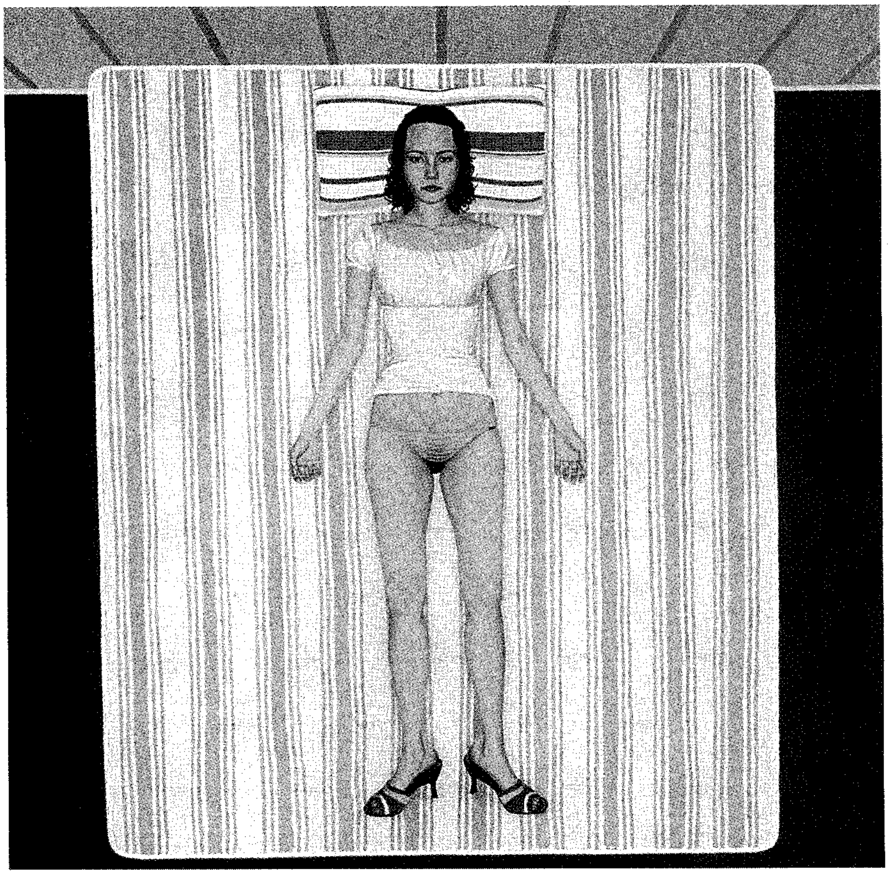

"Babe Suicide," by Mathew Cerletty, at Rivington Arms.

of comparison between such stunners as Picasso's "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon" and Matisse's "Bathers with a Turtle" is like trying to check the oil in a speeding truck. The show's payoff comes from the jagged, overwhelming sense it gives of how different the two were as men and artists—as antithetical, and evenly matched, as Ali and Frazier. Through May 19. (Open Thursdays, Sundays, and Mondays, 10 to 5, and Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 9.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Matthew Barney: The Cremaster Cycle"** attempts an apotheosis of the artist. Frank Lloyd Wright's bobbin turns cornucopia, brimming with the fruits of Barney's epic nine-year "Cremaster" project: all five spectacular, recondite films projected amid outlandish objects, photographs, drawings, decorative elements such as flags and artificial turf, and, along the ramp, runnels of congealed Vaseline. It's oddly, numbingly earnest. There's nothing fake about Barney. Would that there were. A touch of the charlatan (or of humor, God forbid) would prove that he cares what other people think. As it is, the show is seamlessly hermetic: a solipsist's houseparty. Barney's achievement appears to be a richly upholstered dead end. But to miss this landmark event is unthinkable. If not a major artist, he is certainly a major case. Through June 11. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—The twenty-six-year-old Ryan McGinley obsessively photographs the nights and days of his friends and lovers on the Lower East Side. Presented unframed and mounted in obligatory large format, the color pictures are so achingly hip that you have an urge to resist them, but their immediacy and zeal win out. There's nothing surreptitious about McGinley's gaze, and his portraits look more like collaboration than documentation, from the red-headed nymph who slyly eyes the camera as she's caught mid-leap to the man on the verge of orgasm who stares at the camera disconcertingly stone-faced. Through May 18. ♦ **"Scanning: The Aberrant Architectures of Diller + Scofidio,"** a retrospective featuring the designs of the husband-and-wife team. Through May 25. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

ASIA SOCIETY

725 Park Ave., at 70th St. (212-288-6400)—A retrospective of drawings and paintings by Montien Boonma, a Thai artist who died in 2000 at the age of forty-seven, shows the influence of Arte Povera, with its emphasis on unorthodox materials. But Boonma's use of medicinal herbs, candle wax, and ash (in combination with terra-cotta, steel, and brass) was also rooted in a lifelong devotion to Buddhism. One of the show's highlights is a room-sized installation made of thousands of strings of aromatic prayer beads that form a ghostly shrine. Through May 11. ♦ As part of the citywide Buddhism Project, the museum transforms one of its third-floor galleries into a meditation room. Viewers are invited to sit on the floor, carpeted for the occasion (a bench is also provided), and contemplate Japanese temple scrolls from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. One look at the serene expression on the face of the Bodhisattva of Compassion, lounging comfortably on the edge of a rocky cliff as if it were a La-Z-Boy recliner, and the benefits of meditation are obvious. Through Aug. 17. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Seventh Ave. at 27th St. (212-217-5800)—Don't be deterred by the opening section of **"Fashion Italian Style,"** which features vitrines piled with late-model sunglasses, handbags, and shoes in the sort of display that looks better at Bergdorf or Barney's. (One delightful standout, however, is a frothy velvet nosegay of a handbag, from Schiaparelli's 1938 line.) Downstairs, a display of textiles (including a robe made for Pope John Paul II, improbably inspired by Lucio Fontana's slash paintings) precedes the main attraction: Italian fashion. The emphasis is on contemporary designers, but there are some vintage gems, including a 1924 Fortuny gown and a black-and-red frock designed for Ava Gardner by the Fontana sisters (no relation to

Lucio) in 1954 and modelled on a priest's cassock. Through April 12. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, noon to 8; Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Entertaining America: Jews, Movies, and Broadcasting"** considers Hollywood's role as a Jewish empire. A section on "The Jazz Singer" sets clips of Danny Thomas, Jerry Lewis, Neil Diamond, and Krusty the Clown against a projection of Al Jolson's original performance from the first talkie (which includes Jewish ghetto scenes vetted by Benjamin Warner, father of the Warner Bros.), but the case for such influence gets weaker in recent years. Vitrines full of artifacts play the "Jews in the News" game, offering such items as Marilyn Monroe's musical menorah and the conversion certificate she signed after marrying Arthur Miller. The product here, as in Hollywood, is almost religiously indifferent to subject matter, with clips of Holocaust films showing alongside "Seinfeld" reruns. Through Sept. 14. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45; Thursdays, 11 to 8; and Fridays, 11 to 3.)

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (212-869-8089)—Bibliophiles can wade through some lovely editions at **"Izaak Walton's 'The Compleat Angler,'"** timed to coincide with the three-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the book's publication. A version from 1810 comes bound in dark-green straight-grained goatskin; the 1825 bijou edition isn't much larger than a credit card. The gallery is as dimly lighted as a shady river bend, which sets a nice mood for Walton's ageless secrets: pike bite on the blue-headed crawlers found in cow manure, bream respond well to legless grasshoppers, and, apparently, the finest specimens of trout can be easily lured by something Walton calls a dew-worm. Through June 14. (Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 7:30, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

WALTER GAY
Gay (1856-1937), a wealthy, talented American expatriate of Sargent's generation, painted lovely portraits of privilege by concentrating not on the well-to-do but on the settings where they might have sat for him. This small show includes plein-air sketches made in the gardens of country châteaux and views of comfortable drawing rooms—including that of his friend Edith Wharton. Everywhere you look, chandeliers, sconces, and parquet floors shine with precise, relaxed painterliness. Gay's take on domesticity is a long way from say, Gordon Matta-Clark's, but it's quietly compelling. Through April 12. (James Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 212-535-5767.)

JOHN WALKER
Massive tidal landscapes, like those that dominated Walker's last show, are joined by new, vigorously indecipherable pictures that, at first glance, are close to pure abstraction. The finest of them, "Clammer's Marks II," is a graffiti-like thicket of crimson, blue, and brown. Within it, one eventually recognizes representational elements: a curious ideogram of linked puddles, for instance. The canvas's slovenly beauty makes Walker's more naturalistic pictures—with their moons shining down over vast, dark mud fields—seem a little patly romantic. Through April 26. (Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 212-794-0550.)

Short List

PAUL GEORGES / GREGORY GILLESPIE
Salander O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 212-879-6606. Both shows through March 29.

JULIE HEFFERNAN
Littlejohn, 41 E. 57th St. 212-980-2323. Through April 19.

BILL JENSEN
Mary Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-752-2929. Through April 26.

ANTONI TÀPIES
Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292. Through March 29.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

ELIZABETH MURRAY
Murray's new paintings, fractious agglomerations of mini-canvases, look fresh, and better than ever. The components—multicolored fingers, doorknobs, dog bones, hankies, you name it—crowd each other like trays full of mismatched puzzle pieces. Around the perimeter of this bio-Pop Babel, skinny "E" shapes try in vain to corral their neighbors. These jittery clusterings, primed to scatter, could read as social or psychological allegories, if you're so inclined. More simply, the whole show registers as a painter's apologia—a confession, from someone who should know, that shapes have wills of their own. Through April 19. (Pace Wildenstein, 534 W. 25th St. 212-421-3292.)

"THE RECONSTRUCTION"
The venerable independent space Exit Art has moved from SoHo to Hell's Kitchen and inaugurated its vast new quarters with an appealingly topical show. The curators chose thirty-four projects out of four hundred proposals for new installations; nearly all are by unknowns. On opening night, the artists arrived with their power tools, Sheetrock, and pickup trucks. From now until the show's second opening, on April 5, you can wander through the space seven days a week, watching whimsical or functional structures take shape: candy factory, refugee tent, sweatshop, weather station, incubator, etc. The fin-

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ished works remain in place through May 4. (Exit Art, 475 Tenth Ave., at 36th St. 212-966-7745.)

Short List

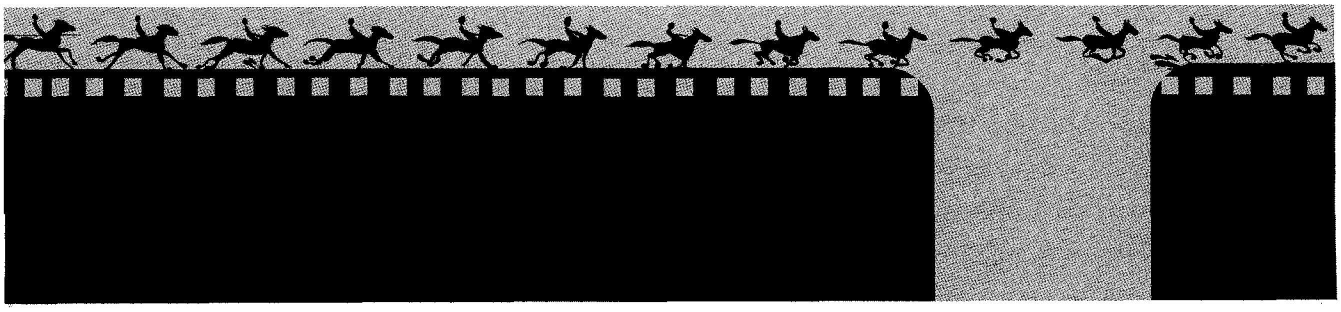
DOUGLAS GORDON
Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111.
Through March 29.

GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

STEPHANIE BROOKS
The artist's laugh-out-loud wordplay recalls the work of Kay Rosen. (Rosen is famous for works such as "Sheep in Wolf's Clothing," which consists of the two-word block "VIRGINia WOOLf.") Some pieces here are visual puns that only imply language, like the three wooden blocks in the precise sizes and shapes of a checkbook, a notepad, and a Palm Pilot. (Brooks' work also riffs on the serial sequences of minimalism.) Others deliver a verbal punch line, like the tidy row of renamed crayons (orange is now "visceral," red "heartache," and purple "compensation for the inadequacies of the past"). Through April 26. (Blum, 99 Wooster St. 212-343-0441.)

MATHEW CERLETTY
The twenty-three-year-old Californian paints and draws bright, sexually narcissistic portraits with technical maturity. Cerletty hides various self-portraits (as man or woman, young or old) among images of his coolly detached friends. The subjects—a young man of Cerletty's description folding sheets in "Interior, the Rape (After Degas)" or a woman lying on a mattress like a patient under sedation—are rendered in bright colors and sharp detail, with a mastery that somehow adds to the sense of a banal world gone awry. Through April 4. (Rivington Arms, 102 Rivington St. 646-654-3213.)

ANA PATRICIA PALACIOS
Palacios's début show of paintings and drawings is timed to coincide with the women's Golden Gloves finals, and practically the only spots of color here are the red leather boxing gloves. Twins, geishas, and other battling women, in various stages of undress, warm up and fight, both in the ring and outside of it. Two stacked grids of smaller works conceal some decorative pieces, but larger paintings, like the sombre schoolgirls—legs akimbo, genitals erased—and Kahlo-esque drag kings of her "Duality" series, hold their own against the fight pictures. Through April 12. (Latin Collector, 153 Hudson St. 212-334-7813.)



The photographer Eadweard Muybridge will be discussed at a symposium on March 31 (see Above and Beyond).

ZOHAR LAZAR

"PROJECT SPACES"
First-time visitors to this show of nine unrelated projects, each housed in its own space, may think they've stumbled onto a floor of artists' studios. In one enchanting architectural intervention, Julianne Swartz cuts peepholes in walls, transforming (with the aid of mirrors, lights, and fiber-optic cable) mundane views of back-room storage into techno-fairylands. Wade Guyton's installation of formalist drawing and sculptures is both elegant and antic, and Rob Fischer's debris-filled glass dumpster has a paradoxical appeal. But the close quarters and over-all disconnectedness threaten to overwhelm the individual works of art. Through May 3. (Artists Space, 38 Greene St. 212-226-3970.)

Short List

ROBERT COLESCOTT
Kind, 136 Greene St. 212-925-1200.
Through April 5.

PHOTOGRAPHY

GAIL ALBERT-HALABAN
The Margaret Mead (or at least the Tina Barney) of upscale, thirtyish Los Angeles women—those who gather on a Tuesday afternoon to compare engagement rings and have private yoga lessons at home. Albert-Halaban documents ritual and banality alike; her pedicured friends spend time at the gym, at the salon, in shoe stores, and in pottery classes. One woman with a Xanax-tranquil expression, shown without friends, shares a bag of cherries with her young daughter in a fortresslike enclosure by the pool. In another image, an innocuous game of Scrabble is made slightly menacing by the presence of the word N-E-S-T-E-R-S on the board. Through April 12. (Meyerowitz, 120 Eleventh Ave. 212-414-2770.)

LYNN DAVIS
Never shy about tackling extremely large subjects with her camera—Greenland's icebergs, Egypt's pyramids, the Hoover Dam—Davis has turned her roving eye to China. A series of the doomed Three Gorges on the Yangtze River is uncharacteristically moody, but pictures of steps leading to a cemetery, on the edge of the Gobi Desert in northwestern China, are vintage Davis: stark, austere, and toned to perfection with sepia, selenium, or gold. The prints themselves are overwhelmingly large, and while the Buddhas, pagodas, ruins, and skyscrapers recall her earlier work, they're so beautiful you may want to jump on the next plane out. Through May 3. (Houk, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-750-7070.)

RALPH EUGENE MEATYARD
In a cheap plastic snaggletoothed mask, the character played by Meatyard's wife in this series of odd, poignant, and ahead-of-their-time portraits is joined by friends and her children in other masks to fill "The Family Album of Lucybelle Crater." Recalling Diane Arbus's tranquil eye and Emmet Gowin's early family photographs—and presaging Cindy Sherman's personae—the "Album," assembled in the early seventies, is being shown whole for the first time in New York. Purposefully misleading captions, such as "Lucybelle Crater and 20 yr old son's legless wife Lucybelle Crater," which describes Lucybelle and a young woman standing in front of a hedge, add to the vertiginous sense of family. Meatyard, who was a Kentucky-based optician before turning to photography, gives the sense in these wonderfully weird, personal documents that he truly saw through the masks and into his subjects' souls. Through April 19. (Pace/MacGill, 534 W. 25th St. 212-929-7000.)

"FLESH TONES"
A mix of prurience and reverence crowds the walls in this survey of the nude in photographic history. From an early Steichen photogravure, George Platt Lynes's beefcake, Irving Penn's voluptuaries, and Harry Callahan's Eleanor to Richard Avedon's Nureyev, Sally Mann's kids, and Nan Goldin's friends, unclothed bodies allegorize, transgress, or simply play around. Emmet Gowin's hauntingly beautiful picture of his wife, nude and folded into a window frame, strikes all these chords at once. John O'Reilly's montages of soldiers, saints, and erections are both precious and shocking. A striking, multiply exposed image by Michael Spano gets to the point of all this nakedness by showing two people engaged in various moments in the confusing mess of sex. Through April 19. (Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave. 212-989-7600.)

Short List

SAUL FLETCHER
Kern, 532 W. 20th St. 212-367-9663.
Through March 29.

DAVID STEWART
In Camera, 511 W. 25th St. 212-647-7667.
Through March 31.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
Asian Week is in full swing. March 26 at 10:15 A.M.: Paintings, religious sculptures, and other works of art from India and Southeast Asia, including a trio of distemper paintings of three "black deities" (Mahakala, Karma-Mahakala, and Lhamo) from eighteenth-century Tibet and a life-size gray schist figure of the bodhisattva Maitreya, circa 200 (estimated to sell for approximately two hundred thousand dollars). ♦ March 27 at 10:15 A.M.: The first of two sessions of Chinese ceramics and art works has an appealing range, featuring such objects as an impressive pair of sancai pottery horses from the Tang dynasty (expected to bring at least a million dollars), a set of sixteen evocative gold lacquer lohan sculptures, also from the Tang period, and a disarming miniature bronze water vessel from the Six Dynasties era, its little frog long covered with a patina of mottled green. ♦ March 27 at 2: The second session, featuring Chinese snuff bottles from the collection of Ann and John Hamilton. ♦ April 1 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: A selection of carpets from France, Ireland, China, and Central Asia. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
March 26 at 10 A.M. and 2: Chinese ceramics and works of art. A large gray Tang-dynasty limestone torso of a bodhisattva, from the Tianlongshan caves (estimated to sell for approximately half a million dollars), is the highlight of the sale. ♦ March 27 at 10 A.M.: Indian and Southeast Asian art, including a large bronze South Indian figure of a dancing Shiva, circa 1100. ♦ April 1-2 at 10 A.M. and 2: The monthly House Sale, a broad selection of moderately priced art, furniture, and decorations. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

INTERNATIONAL ASIAN ART FAIR
The annual spring event organized by Brian and Anna Houghton, featuring art works and decorative objects offered by some fifty-five international dealers. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. 212-642-8572. March 28-April 2.)

ARTS OF PACIFIC ASIA SHOW
Eighty-one dealers offer a wide range of art works and decorative objects. (69th Regiment Armory, Lexington Ave. at 25th St. 212-532-1516. March 27-30.)

TABLES FOR TWO

QUERCY
242 Court St., Brooklyn (718-243-2151)—Every neighborhood has a cursed address, a storefront that's home to a series of snakebit businesses. In Cobble Hill, it's 242 Court Street, a mid-block shoebox with tin ceilings and exposed brick—exactly the sort of no-frills setup that thrives one block east, on Smith Street. Over the past few years, the curse of 242 Court has claimed Rustic (mussels in a broth of zatar), Harvest East (salmon and pastrami with cucumber jelly), Mojo (lobster wonton), some couch-and-coffee joint that specialized in slacker hauteur, and a nouvelle-tofu pita stop—all of them gone and gone quickly, like Spinal Tap drummers.

Enter Jean-François Fraysse of La Lunchonette, the chef who turned a windowless place across from a busy Eighteenth Street bump shop into a surething Chelsea bistro. Fraysse, who learned French farm cooking from his grandmother in Quercy, fights the curse with an irresistible menu that duplicates Lunchonette's down to the typeface and the daily specials written on chalkboards. The restless, this-plus-that fusion of previous tenants gives way to a well-practiced rendition of the French paradox: sautéed foie gras, boeuf bourguignon, and Château Quercy, or sweetbreads, steak au poivre, and a bottle of Cahors. Naturally, Fraysse's blessed tarte Tatin, in both apple and pear versions, reappears in Brooklyn. All of the fare is rough hewn and served with assurance.

But the identical-twin menus make you concentrate on small differences. In Chelsea, the front door faces an open kitchen and you step into *caveau*-like warmth; at Quercy, there's nothing inside to stop the rush of cold air, and patrons, even at tables by the back wall, shiver at every new arrival. At La Lunchonette, the lack of windows is part of the speakeasy charm; Quercy's big front window looks out on a liquor store and oncoming traffic. But Fraysse, who has been spotted counting dinner receipts and wandering through the place in a warm leather coat, seems blithely unaware of any defects. Perhaps this Gallic disregard is just the thing to break the curse. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays for lunch and dinner. Entrées $12.50-$21.50.)

—*Kevin Conley*

MAISON GERARD LTD.: "PARIS 1930"
A small exhibition celebrating the creativity of the Art Deco movement, featuring furniture, lighting, and decorative objects by such craftsmen as LeLeu and the firm of Dominique (including a bed made of rosewood, shagreen, and bronze, from the collection of Walter P. Chrysler, Jr.). (53 E. 10th St. 212-674-7611. March 27-April 19.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Valery Gergiev, who led the first performances of Elijah Moshinsky's 1994 production of **"Otello,"** sets the tone for this very Russian revival, rough around the edges but darkly elegant. The long-awaited Otello of Vladimir Galouzine is a powerful if overheated creation, sacrificing vocal purity for volcanic emotion, but Nikolai Putilin's Iago has a veteran's suave command. The estimable Barbara Frittoli, as Desdemona, should add some Italian refinement to the proceedings. (March 26 and March 29 at 8. These are the final performances.) ♦ The last performance of Berlioz's **"Les Troyens,"** with Sue Patchell, Michelle de Young, and Ben Heppner in the leading roles; James Levine conducts. (March 27 at 6:30.) ♦ Elijah Moshinsky's 1993 production

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of **"Ariadne auf Naxos"** returns to the Met, with Deborah Voigt, Natalie Dessay, Susanne Mentzer, Richard Margison, Nathan Gunn, Wolfgang Brendel, and Waldemar Kmentt leading the cast; Levine. (March 28 and March 31 at 8.) ♦ Gounod's **"Faust,"** with Emily Pulley, Marcus Haddock, and James Morris; Bertrand de Billy. (March 29 at 1:30. This is the final performance.) ♦ **"La Bohème,"** with Hei-Kyung Hong, Angela Maria Blasi, Frank Lopardo, and Mariusz Kwiecien; Julius Rudel. (April 1 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
The final performances of City Opera's all-star revival of Sondheim's **"A Little Night Music,"** featuring Juliet Stevenson, Claire Bloom, Jeremy Irons, Michele Pawk, and Marc Kudisch; Paul Gemignani conducts. (March 26 at 8 and March 29 at 1:30.) ♦ Mark Adamo's **"Little Women,"** an affecting adaptation of the Louisa May Alcott classic, with Jennifer Dudley (repeating her Glimmerglass Opera star turn as the headstrong Jo), Caroline Worra, Chad Shelton, and Charles Robert Stephens; George Manahan. (March 27 at 7:30.) ♦ James Robinson's production of **"La Bohème,"** set on the eve of the First World War, may suffer from a few too many clever ideas, but its original outing, in 2001, proved to be an energizing environment for a fine ensemble of young singers. It returns with Angela Marambio, Adina Aaron, Gerard Powers, and Michael Corvino in the leading roles; Gerald Steichen. (March 28 at 8.) ♦ **"Carmen,"** with Katharine Goeldner (in the title role), Nicolle Foland, Carl Tanner, and Paulo Szot; Joseph Rescigno. (March 29 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 212-307-4100.)

PASCAL DUSAPIN'S "TO BE SUNG"
The music of Dusapin—one of the few young French composers who has avoided the influence of Pierre Boulez—builds on the virtuosic sound explorations of Varèse and Xenakis while retaining a diaphanous lyricism that recalls the music of French composers long past. The "Sounds French" festival comes to a close with the American première of his 1994 chamber opera, presented in a semistaged production by the team of Jean-Philippe Clarac and Olivier Deleuil; the nonsense verses of its English libretto, adapted from Gertrude Stein's text "A Lyrical Opera Made by Two," should be manna to Virgil Thomson fans. The sopranos Sarah Leonard, Susan Narucki, and Elizabeth Farnum lead the cast; Yves Abel conducts. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 212-355-6160. March 27 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Mstislav Rostropovich, whose gift for collaborative bonhomie has made him a travelling festival for half a century, brings the party to the Philharmonic, performing some of his favorite music with a bunch of his favorite people. He continues his series with a program of music by Prokofiev, his mentor and friend, which features the Piano Concerto No. 2, one of the most daring of the composer's early works (with Evgeny Kissin as soloist), and the Symphony No. 5, one of the triumphs of his Soviet period. (March 27 at 7:30.) ♦ Dmitri Shostakovich and Benjamin Britten enjoyed one of the most creatively sustaining artistic friendships of the twentieth century. Rostropovich, who worked intimately with both of them, conducts a program featuring Shostakovich's Ninth Symphony and the Four Entr'actes from the opera "Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District" along with Britten's Violin Concerto (with Maxim Vengerov). (March 28-29 at 8 and April 1 at 7:30.) ♦ Rostropovich picks up his cello to join the violist Yuri Bashmet in a concert that includes Penderecki's String Sextet along with Shostakovich's Viola Sonata (his final work, written from a hospital bed) and the heartrending String Quartet No. 8 in C Minor—which, given the personnel, should be a performance to remember. (March 30 at 3.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

ORCHESTRA OF ST. LUKE'S
In the last of three concert events honoring composers who perished in the Holocaust, James Conlon conducts music by Viktor Ullmann (the Second Symphony) and Pavel Haas, along with music by Zemlinsky and Bartók (the Piano Concerto No. 3, with Andreas Haefliger). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. March 26 at 8.)

"JOHN ADAMS: AN AMERICAN MASTER"
Lincoln Center's springtime celebration of America's most popular orchestral composer continues, with Adams himself conducting the Juilliard Orchestra in "Short Ride in a Fast Machine," "Century Rolls" (a bumptious piano concerto premièred in 1996 by Emanuel Ax, who performs it here), and "Harmonielehre" (a deeply spiritual minimalist masterpiece). (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. March 30 at 5.)

CINCINNATI SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Cincinnati's young new music director, Paavo Järvi (whose taut and powerful performances are beginning to attract notice), brings the orchestra to Carnegie Hall for a concert of Sibelius (the Violin Concerto, with Vadim Repin), Erkki-Sven Tüür (the Estonian composer whose music Järvi has taken around the world), and Shostakovich (the Tenth Symphony). (212-247-7800. March 31 at 8.)

RECITALS

JOHN KAMITSUKA
The exceptional young American pianist (better known in Europe and Asia than he is here) plays extended works by Beethoven and Barber (the Piano Sonata) along with preludes and fugues by Shostakovich and Bach. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. March 26 at 8.)

LEON FLEISHER PLAYS BRAHMS
Before a repetitive-stress injury damaged his right hand, this magisterial pianist was renowned for his performances of Brahms, a composer to whom he has returned now that he's playing works for both hands again. Several longtime colleagues (including the violinist Jaime Laredo and the cellist Sharon Robinson) join him for the Cello Sonata No. 1 in E Minor and the Piano Quartet No. 3 in C Minor, in a concert that also features Dvořák's Terzetto for Two Violins and Viola. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. March 26 at 8.)

BARGEMUSIC
Two composer portraits. March 27-28 at 7:30: The pianist Martin Stadtfeld plays "All Bach," a program featuring the Italian Concerto and the English Suite No. 6 in D Minor. ♦ March 29 at 7:30 and March 30 at 4: "All Beethoven," a concert that includes the Piano Trios Nos. 1 and 3 (with the violinist Mark Peskanov and the cellist Eric Jacobsen) and the Piano Sonata No. 1 in F Minor. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

"MENDELSSOHN: A MIRACULOUS LIFE"
Ruth Laredo gathers some friends (including the Borromeo String Quartet) around the piano for a celebration of the creative family that nurtured the most remarkable child prodigy of the Romantic age. Several piano works by Fanny Mendelssohn are featured, but the real gem is the Sextet for Piano and Strings, a tempestuous (and infrequently performed) masterpiece from Felix's early days. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. March 28 at 7.)

"MILTON BABBITT: AMERICAN MASTER"
A group of trusted Babbitt specialists (including the hornist William Purvis, the soprano Judith Bettina, and the pianist Alan Feinberg) offer a selection of vocal works and solo instrumental pieces in honor of the brainy and beguiling twelve-tone innovator. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. 212-279-4200. March 28 at 7:30.)

YING QUARTET: "NO BOUNDARIES" SERIES
In a season brimming with concerts paying tribute to America's leading composers, Ned Rorem's cup is overflowing, with a passel of events leading up to (and, doubtless, continuing beyond) his eightieth birthday, in October. The composer himself will participate in the latest of them, accompanying the tenor Scott Murphree in a clutch of his Paul Goodman set-

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tings, with Murphree joining the Ying for Rorem's limpid "Mourning Scene." The quartet also performs the New York première of Rorem's String Quartet No. 5 ("United States") and Ravel's Quartet in F Major. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. March 28 at 8:30. ♦ Note: Rorem will read from his diaries, and discuss his Goodman songs, in a pre-concert talk at 7:30.)

MIDORI AND ROBERT MCDONALD
The violinist and the pianist, a powerful pair, play a concert of Grieg, Schnittke, Webern, and Beethoven (the "Kreutzer" Sonata). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. March 29 at 7:30.)

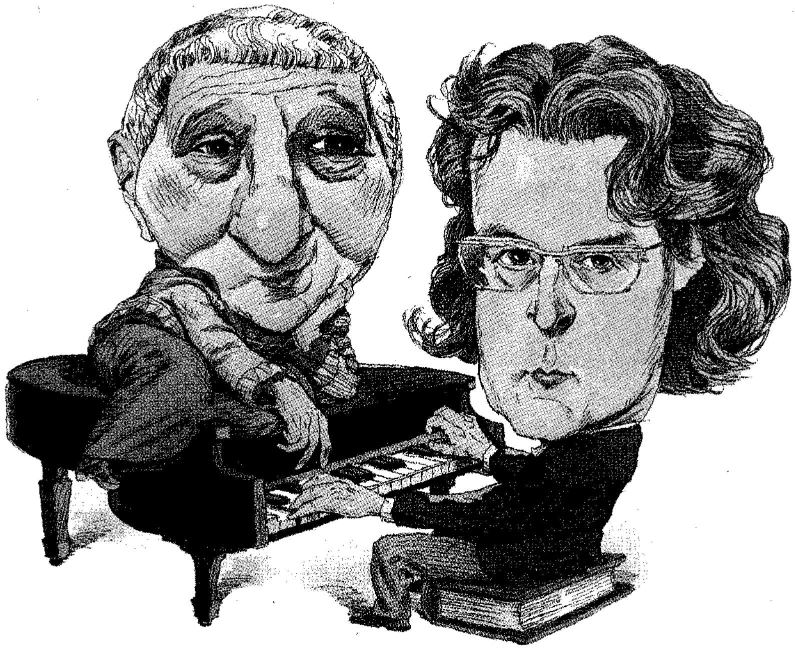
AMERICAN FESTIVAL OF MICROTONAL MUSIC
Early music has its day in the sun at the spunky annual festival of new and adventurous works, with the harpsichordist Rebecca Pachefsky, the bassoonist Johnny Reinhard, the Douglas Frank Chorale, and others offering music by Bach, Palestrina, and Andreas Werckmeister, performed in a range of antique tunings. (Washington Square Church, 135 W. 4th St., at Sixth Ave. March 29 at 3. Tickets at the door.)

MENDELSSOHN STRING QUARTET/ SANFORD SYLVAN
In the last of three Beethoven concerts, the Mendelssohn performs the Quartet in F Major, Op. 135, and the Quartet in B-Flat Major, Op. 130 (with the "Grosse Fuge"); Sylvan (with the pianist Diane Walsh) sings the song cycle "An die ferne Geliebte" in between. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. March 29 at 8.)

BRADLEY BROOKSHIRE
The young harpsichordist offers an afternoon of Bach (including three of the English Suites). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. March 30 at 3.)

MET CHAMBER ENSEMBLE
Brahms's two sets of "Liebeslieder Walzer" (featuring the soprano Alexandra Deshorties and the tenor Matthew Polenzani) cap a program of music by Poulenc, Satie, Debussy (the "Chansons de Bilitis"), and others. James Levine and Ken Noda are the pianists. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. March 30 at 5.)

ALFRED BRENDEL
The eminent pianist returns to Carnegie Hall to explore, once more, the music of the Viennese masters, in a program of sonatas by Beethoven, Schubert (the Sonata in C Major, D. 840), and Mozart. (212-247-7800. March 30 at 7:30.)



The American première of Pascal Dusapin's opera "To Be Sung" (with a libretto based on a text by Gertrude Stein) closes the "Sounds French" festival on March 27.

JOHN CUNEO

ABOVE AND BEYOND

MUYBRIDGE'S LEGACY
Perhaps best known for his images of animals and humans, the nineteenth-century photographer Eadweard Muybridge, according to Rebecca Solnit's new book "River of Shadows," should also be credited for the existence of Hollywood and Silicon Valley. Solnit illustrates how Muybridge's 1872 studies of a gelding—which revealed for the first time that during a gallop all four of a horse's feet are simultaneously off the ground—gave birth to motion-picture technology. On March 31 at 7:30, the New York Institute for the Humanities considers Muybridge's role in modern society, with a symposium featuring Solnit and such interested parties as the painter Chuck Close, the writer Lawrence Weschler, the photographer Joel Meyerowitz, and the neurologist and writer Oliver Sacks, who will entertain the theory that Muybridge's creative genius may have stemmed from a head injury. (Angel Orensanz Foundation, 172 Norfolk St. 212-529-7194.)

READINGS
March 26 at 7:30: Jonathan Lethem, Heidi Julavitz, Elissa Schappel, Rob Spillman, and other writers pay tribute to the novelist Amanda Davis, who died recently in a plane crash, with a reading of her work. (Housing Works Used Book Café, 126 Crosby St. 212-334-3324.) ♦ March 29 at 2: As part of the weekend-long Small Press Book Fair, Priscilla Becker, Nell Freudenberger, and others read from their contributions to *The Paris Review*. (Small Press Center, 20 W. 44th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ March 31 at 8: The concert pianist and writer Alfred Brendel reads new poems and discusses the relationship between words and music with the poet Charles Simic. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.)

MORE TALKS
March 28 at 6: The curator John Bidwell presents a program titled "Picturing Natural History: The Art and Science of Botanical Illustration." (Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St. For more information, call 212-590-0333.) ♦ March 30 at 2: Gerard T. Koeppel, the author of "Water for Gotham," discusses the Croton Aqueduct, which was built in 1842 and gave New York City, for the first time, a dependable source of clean drinking water. (Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. 212-534-1672.)

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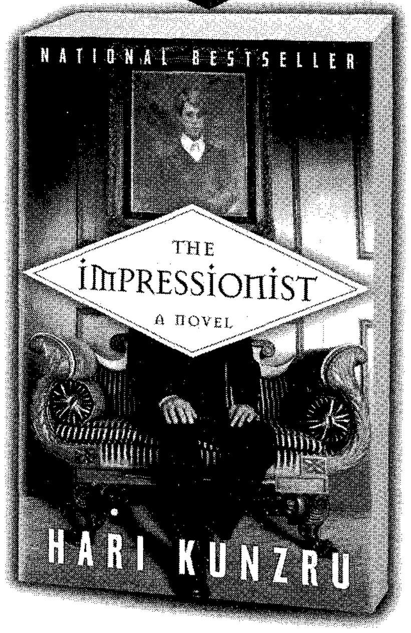

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MOVIES OPENING

ASSASSINATION TANGO
Robert Duvall wrote and directed this drama, in which he plays a hit man who falls in love with an Argentinean tango instructor (Luciana Pedraza). Opening March 28.

BASIC
After an Army Ranger (Samuel L. Jackson) and several cadets disappear during a training exercise, a rebellious D.E.A. agent (John Travolta) is called in to investigate. Directed by John McTiernan ("Rollerball"). Opening March 28.

THE CORE
A team of scientists attempt to repair the Earth's inner core, in a disaster movie directed by Jon Amiel. With Hilary Swank, Aaron Eckhart, Delroy Lindo, and Stanley Tucci. Opening March 28.

THE GOOD OLD NAUGHTY DAYS
A collection of French blue movies from the silent era. Opening March 28. (Quad Cinema.)

HEAD OF STATE
Chris Rock runs for President, in a comedy he directed and co-wrote with Ali LeRoi. The cast includes Bernie Mac, Robin Givens, and Dylan Baker. Opening March 28.

RAISING VICTOR VARGAS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening March 28. (Empire 25 and Sunshine Cinema.)

STEVIE
A documentary by Steve James ("Hoop Dreams") about his relationship with a troubled Illinois man he mentored in a Big Brother program. Opening March 28. (Film Forum.)

UNKNOWN PLEASURES
Jia Zhang-Ke ("Platform") directed this drama in which two bored young men in a provincial Chinese town decide to rob a bank. In Mandarin. Opening March 26. (Cinema Village.)

FILM NOTES

ALL THE REAL GIRLS
For his follow-up to "George Washington," the director David Gordon Green has turned his gaze upon a quiet mill town in North Carolina. You can tell the place is quiet because Paul (Paul Schneider) enjoys a reputation as its most carousing and cavalier stud. In fact, Paul is a nondescript time-waster of twenty-two, a blunt boy whose best friend is really his mother (Patricia Clarkson). Having tasted and discarded half the local womenfolk, Paul is nonplussed when he finds himself falling for, and then two-timed by, Noel (Zooey Deschanel). Green presents this as an education of the heart, a lyrical act of persuasion that is backed up by random shots of sunsets and tumbling creeks. To the rest of us, it looks like comeuppance. Why the sweetly unreadable Noel should hang around the place a minute longer is anybody's guess.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 2/17 & 24/03.) (Angelika Film Center.)

BIGGER THAN LIFE
Nicholas Ray's bizarre 1956 medical melodrama is all jittery nerves and loose ends. James Mason (who also produced) stars as a principled public-school teacher who becomes addicted to cortisone and develops psychotic delusions of grandeur. The opening depicts the constrictions of a teacher's lot (he moonlights as a taxi dispatcher to make ends meet) and the claustrophobia of fifties family life (he doesn't tell his wife about his second job because she might consider it beneath him). So it's disconcerting that the rest of the movie coerces the audience into rooting for Mason to reënter the same existential cage. Cortisone turns him into a quasi-fascist megalomaniac; home and family redeem him. Cyril Hume and Richard Maibaum wrote the script, from a *New Yorker* article by Berton Roueché.—*Michael Sragow* (Gramercy Theatre; March 28.)

BRINGING DOWN THE HOUSE
The joy of seeing Queen Latifah in a new film is muted by the general lameness of this would-be ghetto-fabulous comedy. The setup has the Queen as an escaped convict, moving in with an uptight lawyer (Steve Martin) whom she tries to convince of her innocence. The script and Adam Shankman's shameless direction seem to belong to a torpid "Saturday Night Live" sketch—Martin's character receives a predictable hip-hop facelift, and his shufflin'-gangsta performance offers nothing new. Only Eugene Levy, who plays a lawyer colleague in awe of Latifah's bodaciousness, arouses any comic interest.—*Bruce Diones* (Battery Park 16, Cinema 2, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

CHICAGO
The time is the nineteen-twenties, but the setting is so stylized, so shamelessly grounded in a hundred other shows and films, that "Chicago" barely qualifies as a period piece. Catherine Zeta-Jones is Velma Kelly, and Renée Zellweger is Roxie Hart. Each is a man-killer, and each resides in jail, plotting her defense with the silken legal help of Billy Flynn (Richard Gere). The music and lyrics by Kander and Ebb operate on the old-fashioned principle that every song should be a showstopper, regardless of whether the show should be stopped. The director, Rob Marshall, cuts away furiously during every song, and this chronic wish to glance aside makes us wonder: could the performers not weather the camera's unstinting gaze? The only player to conquer the movie is Zeta-Jones, who gets by on a full tank of unleaded oomph.—*A.L.* (1/6/03) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, Cinema 3, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

CITY OF GOD
Just how far into your face can a movie get? This one has every intention of leaving you scalded and bruised. Set in Rio de Janeiro, it was directed by Fernando Meirelles, who tries every trick known to cameramen: freeze frames, whip pans, multiple dissolves, slow motion, double motion, any kind of motion. The object is to keep pace with his characters, the young and dispossessed of the Brazilian slums. The movie hastens roughly from the nineteen-sixties to the eighties, as we watch the boys either die or grow old before their time. The result is a jolting ride, but such is the skill on show that we run the risk of being too exhilarated to notice every death; does the film convince in its plea for the forgotten poor, or are we encouraged to forget them as they fall? In Portuguese.—*A.L.* (1/20/03) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, and 62nd & Broadway.)

DAREDEVIL
Ben Affleck is a blind lawyer who becomes a superhero at night, and much of this comic-book spectacular is so dark that you can't see it. Not that you're missing anything. What can be seen is derivative, flat, and halfhearted. Dressed in a maroon jumpsuit, Affleck tries for a light-voiced, unemphatic presence, and he registers no more powerfully here than he did in "Pearl Harbor." He seems a put-on movie star, a lazybones puffed by helium bursts of publicity.—*David Denby* (3/3/03) (Empire 25, Union Square, and Village East Cinemas.)

DREAMCATCHER
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, and 34th Street Theatre.)

THE HOURS
It has to overcome an over-all morbidity, a fractured time sequence, and Philip Glass's intrusive, chiming score, and, amazingly, it does. Stephen Daldry directed this adaptation of Michael Cunningham's prize-winning 1998 novel, from a script by David Hare. They've fashioned a lovely, serious work—as good as any recent "literary" movie—devoted to two themes, the variety of human bonds, especially the bond of love, and the gift that the dying make to the living. Nicole Kidman gives a revelatory performance as Virginia Woolf, both in 1923, at the time of writing "Mrs. Dalloway," and in 1941, when she loaded her coat with stones and walked into a river. Julianne Moore is a depressed Los Angeles housewife in 1951, and Meryl Streep plays a contemporary New York literary editor who hopes to give a party for a poet friend (Ed Harris) dying of AIDS. The widely separated episodes fit together as surely and lightly as dancers in a Balanchine ballet.—*D.D.* (12/23 & 30/02) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 72nd Street East, and Union Square.)

THE HUNTED
There's trouble in the Pacific Northwest: Benicio Del Toro is in the woods, protecting the deer. A former U.S. Army assassin, he's been trained in wilderness tracking and hand-to-hand combat, but a tour of duty in Bosnia sent him over the edge. This is bad news for the master tracker L. T. Bonham (Tommy Lee Jones), happily retired to British Columbia. After Del Toro takes out two hunters, the F.B.I. picks up Jones in a helicopter and charges him with bringing in his former protégé. This manly movie belongs to the veteran director William Friedkin, who has no idea how to show the art of tracking onscreen. By the evidence presented here, it seems to mean smelling your fingers, staring into tree branches, and walking oddly, as though you've pulled a muscle.—*Michael Agger* (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

IRREVERSIBLE
A thoroughly nasty piece of work, though not an empty or a foolish one: the director, Gaspar Noé, gives every sign of careful cleverness. His film tells of a young couple (Monica Bellucci and Vincent Cassel) who make love, go to a Paris party, and leave separately. She is raped and beaten; he pursues the assailant and takes what he believes to be revenge. The whole story runs backward, beginning with death and violation and rewinding to a nice afternoon, a bright white screen, and the joyful strains of Beethoven. The irony is pure acid: any pleasure that we meet later in the film is spoiled and scarred by the events of the first half, which are not so much irreversible as unwatchable. The trouble is that the picture has fallen victim to its own reputation; from here on, despite the seriousness of Noé's intentions, he will be known as the Man Who Showed Too Much. In French.—*A.L.* (3/10/03) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, and New York Twin.)

KING OF KINGS
"I Was a Teenage Jesus" quipped Hollywood wags back in 1961 at the prospect of Nicholas ("Rebel Without a Cause") Ray's tackling the Gospels. But the film turned out to be a lively compendium of bad taste (the already scantily clad Salome does a striptease without the strip), bold ideas (Barabbas as a political rebel), gigantic spectacle (seven thousand extras for the Sermon on the Mount!), and sometimes woeful, sometimes inspired casting. (Frank Thring is hideous as Herod; among the compensations are Robert Ryan's John the Baptist.) In the just-wandered-in-from-Scandinavia school of pale big-screen Messiahs, Jeffrey Hunter offers surprising conviction and intensity, bringing off his parables with otherworldly charisma even when wading into crowds like Donahue or Oprah.—*M.S.* (Gramercy Theatre; March 28.)

LAUREL CANYON
After the solemnities of "High Art," the director Lisa Cholodenko has turned to lighter matters: specifically, what to do if your mother is an unreconstructed hippie. Sam (Christian Bale) takes his fiancée, Alex (Kate Beckinsale), home to California to meet his mom, Jane (Frances McDormand), a record

producer whose walls of photographs bear testament to a life misspent in rock. She is all the family that Sam has but far more than he wants, especially since Jane's idea of quality time is to come within an inch of seducing her son's girlfriend, while bringing a shameless young rock star (Alessandro Nivola) along for the ride. The movie has poise and a lightly perspiring sexiness, but also an uncertain sense of humor, and you end up rooting for the squares—especially Sam and his colleague Sara (Natascha McElhone), who have more fun in the front of a Volvo than seems either practical or legal. The soundtrack is full of ersatz British pop, so tuneless and squally that it could almost be the real thing.—*A.L.* (3/10/03) (Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

THE LIFE OF DAVID GALE

A hyper-articulate and, at times, heartfelt movie, but a mess nonetheless. Kevin Spacey stars as a philosophy professor and anti-death-penalty advocate who winds up on death row in Texas. Laura Linney plays his academic and protest-movement colleague, whom he allegedly raped and murdered. Kate Winslet turns up as an ace investigative reporter from New York who finds the last-minute evidence that may exonerate him. Spacey and Linney have a couple of lovely scenes together, but the thriller mechanics of the movie (it's plotted against a clock) insult the audience. At the climactic moment, Winslet's rented car stalls like a dumb burro. Alan Parker directed, and the script was written by an ex-philosophy professor, Charles Randolph.—*D.D.* (3/3/03) (Battery Park 16, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Union Square, and Village East Cinemas.)

NIGHT AND THE CITY

Several years before he made "Rififi," Jules Dassin directed this less flamboyant 1950 thriller, which is much less well known, but in some ways better. Dassin's shocking specialty—a kind of stifled violence that one fears will explode—finds the right milieu in the Gerald Kersh novel, a complex view of the underside of London entertainment. An Anglo-American cast is headed by Richard Widmark, who has possibly his best role as Harry Fabian, "the artist without an art," a tout with a creative passion for fantastic, shady schemes. The victims of double-crossing artistry include Googie Withers, Francis L. Sullivan, Gene Tierney, Herbert Lom, and—as the old-time wrestler pitted against Mike Mazurki—Stanislaus Zbyszko.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; starting March 28.)

OLD SCHOOL

Vince Vaughn, tall and handsome, with a widow's peak and a roving eye, is easily the most untrustworthy man in the movies since the advent of Bill Murray. In this genial hit movie, Vaughn is operating in low gear as a cocky salesman; the role isn't enough for him, but he's still hilarious, and so, at times, is the movie. Written (with many collaborators) and directed by Todd Phillips and assembled under the benevolent auspices of the comedy veteran Ivan Reitman, "Old School" follows a trio of thirtyish losers unable to face responsibility: the earnest and baffled Mitch (Luke Wilson); the hapless and uninhibited Frank (Will Ferrell); and the flimflamming wise guy Beanie (Vaughn). Together, the three open a frat house at the edge of some distinguished seat of higher learning. Each of the leads is funny in his own style, especially Ferrell, who has an almost frighteningly infantile quality.—*D.D.* (3/17/03) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

Judy Marte and Victor Rasuk in "Raising Victor Vargas."

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

THE PIANIST

Roman Polanski's drama about the survival of a real-life Polish Jew, the pianist Wladyslaw Szpilman (Adrien Brody), during the grim days of the Holocaust is a movie that has been perfectly produced. The sense of scale and detail is exact, and the violence is neither exaggerated nor minimized but presented with clear-eyed accuracy. Yet this is not a work of great originality or imagination. Its protagonist lacks depth, and the theme of survival through hiding is, by its very nature, redundant. The playwright Ronald Harwood adapted the 1946 book that Szpilman wrote about his experiences without attempting to open up the hero at all. Is he ashamed, defiant, guilty? Grateful for his luck? We haven't a clue. His survival is an anomaly, a mistake, a joke—and that may be why the story appealed to Polanski. Shot largely in Warsaw.—*D.D.* (1/13/03) (Battery Park 16, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE QUIET AMERICAN

The second adaptation of Graham Greene's novel, and, on the whole, a more successful effort than Joseph Mankiewicz's, of 1958. Michael Caine may lack the defeated nobility that Michael Redgrave brought to the role of the hero—a British journalist named Fowler—but few can beat Caine when it comes to the sad and the seedy. What is more, he squares off beautifully against Brendan Fraser. With his fine if bumbling manners, and the earnest thickness of his spectacles, Fraser is ideal as Pyle, the young do-gooder who, almost despite himself, winds up doing harm. The two men share a love for a young Vietnamese woman (Do Hai Yen), and the director, Phillip Noyce, manages not to whack us too hard with the symbolic weight of their rivalry. Greene fans, a prickly bunch at the best of times, will pick holes in the movie, but Christopher Doyle's camera, slithering through the rooms and battlegrounds of an alluring land, takes us as close as we could wish to the heart of the matter.—*A.L.* (12/2/02) (East 86th Street Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE SAFETY OF OBJECTS

A good cast can't save this pretentious movie about suburban lives of quiet desperation. Glenn Close, Dermot Mulroney, Patricia Clarkson, Kristen Stewart (the strikingly androgynous girl from "Panic Room"), and others say silly, overthought things to each other, and seem unable to start their cars without having some sort of epiphany. The director Rose Troche adapted the stories of A. M. Homes, and, as is the case in a lot of short-story movies, the connections between the characters feel manufactured, designed for maximum gazing across lawns at lighted windows and teary bedroom confessions.—*M.A.* (Union Square.)

SPIDER

Patrick McGrath adapted his own novel about the muddled mind of a schizophrenic, Dennis (Spider) Cleg. As directed by David Cronenberg, the film is an emotionless exercise in audience patience. While Spider (Ralph Fiennes) mumbles around recalling the madness of his childhood, the viewer must distinguish what's real from what's delusional. The anemic Oedipal puzzle (the mother is played by Miranda Richardson, who, at times, morphs into Spider's landlady and his father's murderous girlfriend) unwinds tediously and Cronenberg's precise, desolate camerawork only adds to the artful numbness.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center, Eastside Playhouse, and Kew Gardens Cinema.)

TALK TO HER

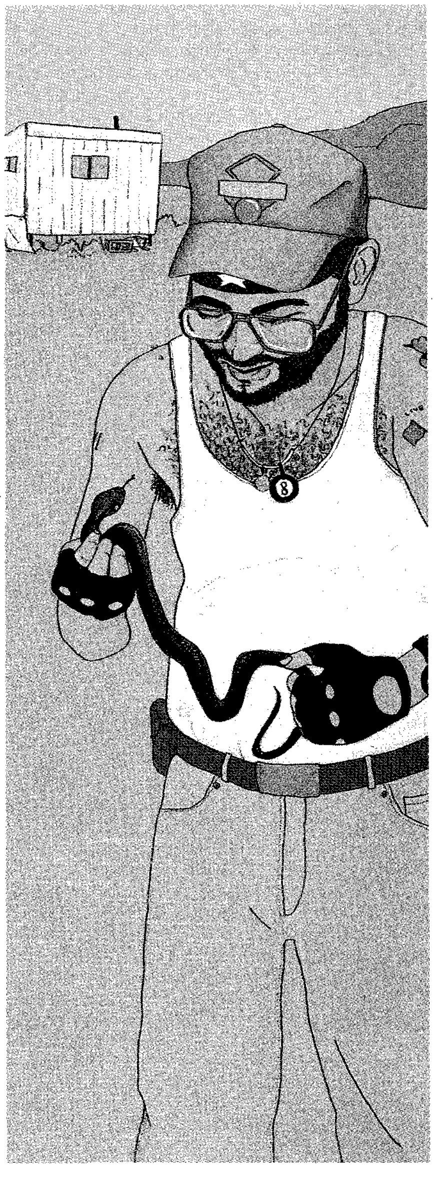
In Pedro Almodóvar's odd but touching romantic drama, two very different men are drawn together by a common task: taking care of women who have fallen into a coma. Benigno (Javier Cámara), a shy, seemingly asexual young male nurse, looks after Alicia (Leonor Watling), a beautiful ballet dancer. Marco (Darío Grandinetti), a fortyish Argentine writer, becomes the lover of a fierce, long-waisted female bullfighter (Rosario Flores). After she is gored in the ring, she never speaks again. Both love affairs are touched by fantasy. Almodóvar's point appears to be that you can't have love without fable—that every love affair is an improbable narrative wrung from non-being and loneliness. The movie is shot in a new, subdued style for the director: past and present flow together, and everything seems touched with a melancholy magic. Two ballets by the choreographer Pina Bausch are integral to the film's themes. In Spanish.—*D.D.* (11/25/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)

TEARS OF THE SUN

A rousing celebration of American military expertise, but one pricked by conscience. The stoical Lieutenant A. K. Waters (Bruce Willis) leads a crack unit of Navy SEALs into a civil conflict in Nigeria between Muslims and Christians. Their mission is to rescue an Italian-born American citizen (Monica Bellucci), a doctor operating a Catholic missionary hospital. Bellucci, a flaming dark beauty with a sumptuous décolletage, runs through the jungle with her shirt partly open. Because of such absurdities, and the general atmosphere of American noblesse oblige, skeptics have dismissed the movie as an embarrassing crock—another contrived occasion for U.S. soldiers to demonstrate their nobility while killing a great many nasty-looking Africans. Baldly stated, this is true, but the movie, directed by Antoine Fuqua, has been made with ravishing skill. The cinematographer Mauro Fiore does wonders matching the natural light from shot to shot.—*D.D.* (3/17/03) (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

TEN

When last we saw the Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami, he was capturing the songs of Ugandan street children with his digital video camera, delighting in the portability and intimacy of the new technology. In this revelatory film, he reverses course and fixes his camera to the dashboard of a car driven by an unnamed, beautiful divorcée (Mania Akbari) through the streets of Tehran. (The camera faces inward.) It's a postmodern gesture, a movie seemingly without a director, a drama that's also a documentary: the streets are real, the conversations scripted. The talk centers on the corseted lives of women in modern Iran, and Kiarostami's minimalist methods enhance a palpable sense of lives choked with frustration. Ironically, for a film about hidden women, the natural performance by Amin (Amin Maher), the ten-year-old son of the divorcée, reveals the most about their situation. In Farsi.—*M.A.* (Quad Cinema.)



"Stevie" opens March 28 at Film Forum.

LARA TOMLIN

TRON
Steven Lisberger's début picture, from 1982, was supposed to be the summer's runaway fantasy hit; no one counted on the wild success of a small movie called "E.T." But, as a technical influence, this breakthrough computer-generated feature ultimately took the crown, inspiring a generation of animators with cinema's first foray into virtual reality. Jeff Bridges plays Flynn, a game ace who is flung into the mainframe of a media conglomerate when he attempts to prevent the theft of his video-game programs. There, he joins forces with Tron (Bruce Boxleitner), the automaton double of the system's security programmer, to fight the tyranny of the Master Control Program. The fun comes not from the movie's bare-bones attempt to be an electronic Oz but from the wonders Flynn encounters within the supercomputer's circuitry: fast and furious light cycles, lethal glowing disks that recall Oddjob's hat, and a winged orb that soars on its own yellow brick road of solar energy.—*M.S.* (Moving Image; March 30.)

ALSO PLAYING

BEND IT LIKE BECKHAM
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.
THE GIRL FROM PARIS
Paris.
HORNS AND HALOS
Cinema Village.
NOWHERE IN AFRICA
BAM Rose Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.
RUSSIAN ARK (12/16/02)
Cinema Village.
SPUN
Sunshine Cinema.
VIEW FROM THE TOP
Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, and 34th Street Theatre.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kew Gardens Cinema, 81-05 Lefferts Blvd., Queens (718-441-9835).
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (212-334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through March 30: Films selected by the New York Film Critics Circle. March 29 at 1:30: "Heaven's Gate" (1980, Michael Cimino), introduced by Stephen Whitty. ♦ March 30 at 1: "Pulp Fiction" (1994, Quentin Tarantino), introduced by Jami Bernard. ♦ March 30 at 4: "Tron" (†), introduced by Marshall Fine. ♦ Repertory nights. March 29-30 at 6:30: "2001: A Space Odyssey" (1968, Stanley Kubrick).
BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—March 26 at 4:30 and 9:10: "Sugar Sweet" (2001, Desiree Lim). ♦ March 26 at 7: "Ruthie and Connie" (2002, Deborah Dickson). ♦ March 27-30: Oscar-winning films that take place in New York. March 27 at 4:30 and 7:30: "The Apartment" (1960, Billy Wilder). ♦ March 28 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Midnight Cowboy" (1969, John Schlesinger). ♦ March 29 at 2, 5:20, and 8:50: "The Godfather" (1972, Francis Ford Coppola). ♦ March 30 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "Marty" (1955, Delbert Mann). ♦ Mario Bava films. March 31 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Baron Blood" (1972; in Italian). ♦ Special event. April 1 at 7: Jeff Scher's animated shorts (1976-2003).
FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through March 27: "Fassbinder," a six-week retrospective. March 26-27 at 1, 2:45, 4:30, 6:15, 8, and 9:45: "Love Is Colder Than Death" (1969; in German). ♦ Starting March 28 at 1:20, 3:20, 5:20, 7:20, and 9:20: "Night and the City" (†).
GRAMERCY THEATRE
127 E. 23rd St. (212-777-4900)—Through April 12: "Nicholas Ray, Writ Large," a twenty-three-film retrospective. March 27 at 4: "Hot Blood" (1956). ♦ March 27 at 6 and March 29 at 2: "The True Story of Jesse James" (1957). ♦ March 27 at 8 and March 29 at 8:30: "Wind Across the Everglades" (1958). ♦ March 28 at 2:30: "King of Kings" (†). ♦ March 28 at 6: "Bitter Victory" (1957). ♦ March 28 at 8: "Bigger Than Life" (†). ♦ March 29 at 4: "The Lusty Men" (1952). ♦ March 29 at 6:15: "Johnny Guitar" (1954).
PIONEER THEATRE
155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300)—Through April 1: Screenings of Oscar-nominated shorts, both animated and live action.
SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (212-358-0573)—Midnight movies. March 28-29: "Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter" (1984, Joseph Zito).
THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—"New Voices Since the Eighties." March 29 at 6: "Do the Right Thing" (1989, Spike Lee). ♦ March 29 at 8:15: "Jungle Fever" (1991, Lee). ♦ March 30 at 2 and 7: "The Scent of Green Papaya" (1993, Tran Anh Hung; in Vietnamese). ♦ March 30 at 4 and 9: "Cyclo" (1995, Tran; in Vietnamese and Italian).
WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through April 6: "New Directors/New Films." Some screenings will be held at Alice Tully Hall and the Gramercy Theatre. See www.filmlinc.com for venues. March 26 at 8 and March 27 at 9: "Raising Victor Vargas" (2002, Peter Sollett). ♦ March 27 at 6 and March 28 at 9: "Bus 174" (2002, José Padilha; in Portuguese). ♦ March 27 at 6 and March 28 at 9: "Infernal Affairs" (2002, Andrew Lau and Alan Mak; in Cantonese). ♦ March 27 at 9 and March 28 at 6: "Mondays in the Sun" (2002, Fernando León de Aranoa; in Spanish). ♦ March 28 at 6 and March 29 at 9: "Respiro" (2002, Emanuele Crialese; in Italian). ♦ March 29 at 1 and March 30 at 6: "Angel on the Right" (2002, Jamshed Usmonov; in Tajik). ♦ March 29 at 2 and 6 and March 30 at 4 and 7: "The Day I Will Never Forget" (2002, Kim Longinotto). ♦ March 29 at 3:30 and March 30 at 8:30: "Ticket to Jersualem" (2002, Rashid Masharawi; in Arabic). ♦ March 29 at 6 and March 30 at noon: "My Architect" (2003, Nathaniel Kahn). ♦ March 29 at 9 and March 30 at 3: "The Embalmer" (2002, Matteo Garrone; in Italian). ♦ March 31 at 6 and April 1 at 9: "The Glow" (2002, Igal Bursztyn; in Hebrew). ♦ March 31 at 6 and April 1 at 9: "A Red Bear" (2002, Adrian Caetano; in Spanish). ♦ March 31 at 9 and April 1 at 6: "Wild Berries" (2002, Miwa Nishikawa; in Japanese). ♦ March 31 at 9 and April 1 at 6: "Black Tape" (2002, Fariborz Kamkari; in Farsi and Kurdish). ♦ Special event. March 31 at 6: "John Adams: A Film Portrait" (2003, David Jeffcock), introduced by Adams.

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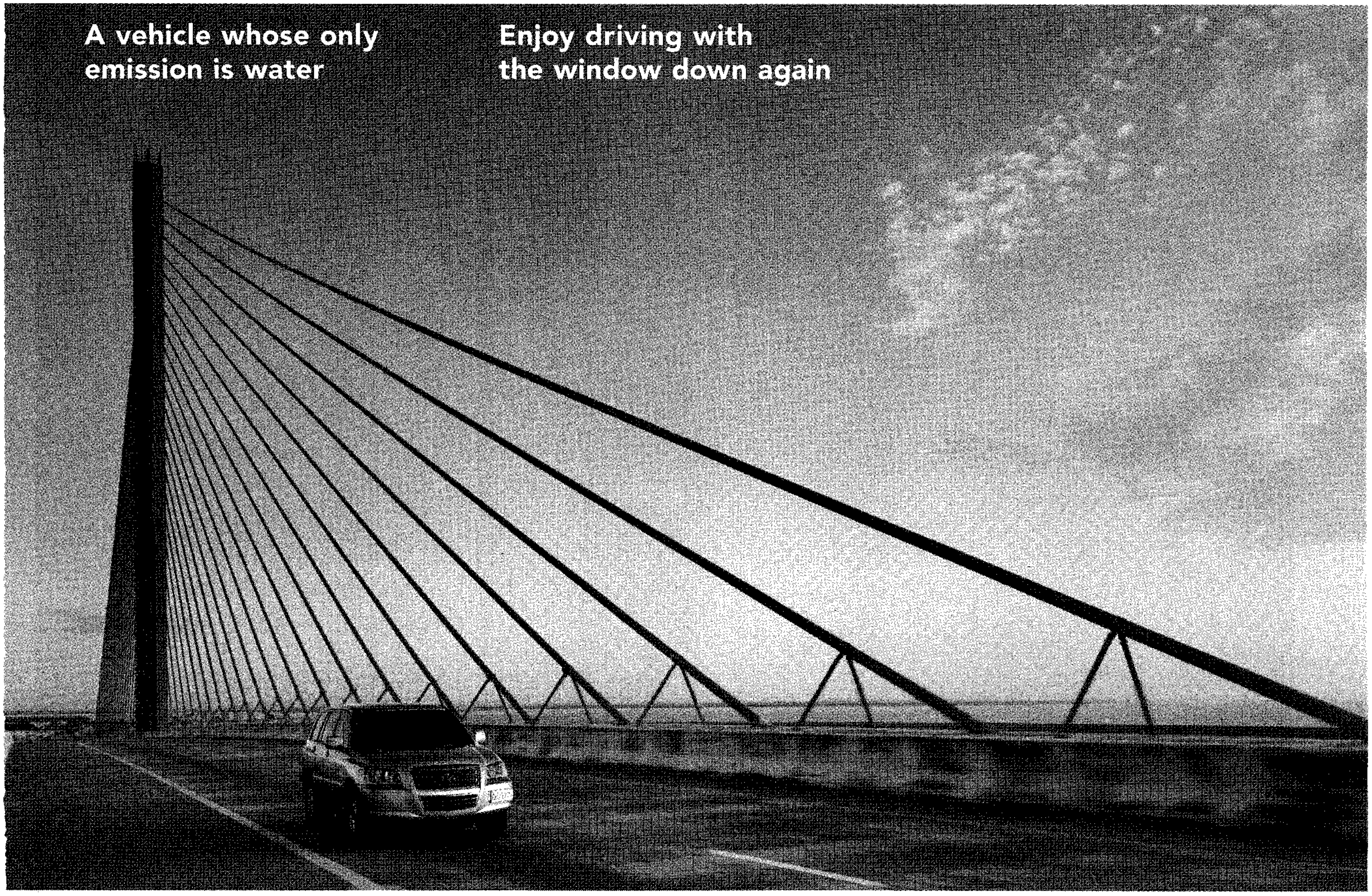
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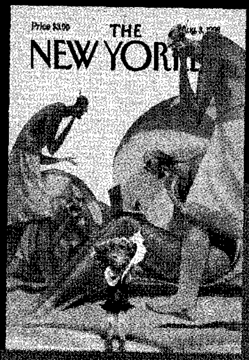
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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

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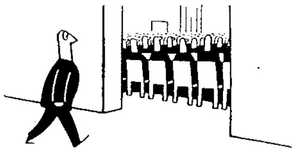
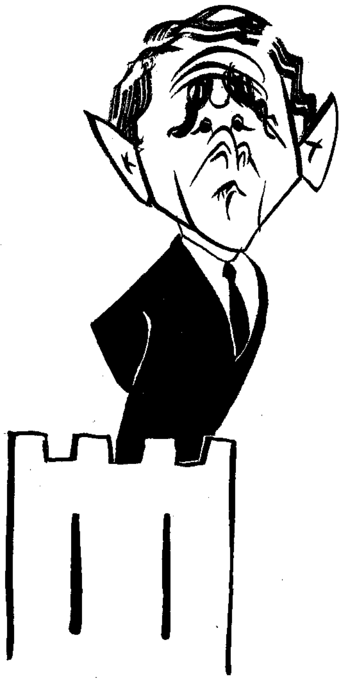


On June 12, 1945, a month after V-E Day, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe, Dwight D. Eisenhower, received an ancient honor, the "freedom" of the City of London. In his address that day, at Guildhall, General Eisenhower said:

> Humility must always be the portion of any man who receives acclaim earned in blood of his followers and sacrifices of his friends.
>
> Conceivably a commander may have been professionally superior. He may have given everything of his heart and mind to meet the spiritual and physical needs of his comrades. He may have written a chapter that will glow forever in the pages of military history. Still, even such a man—if he existed—would sadly face the fact that his honors cannot hide in his memories the crosses marking the resting places of the dead. They cannot soothe the anguish of the widow or the orphan whose husband or father will not return.
>
> The only attitude in which a commander may with satisfaction receive the tributes of his friends is in the humble acknowledgment that no matter how unworthy he may be, his position is the symbol of great human forces that have labored arduously and successfully for a righteous cause.

Humility is what Eisenhower mentioned before all else—before pride in his honors, before joy in the Allied victory. And humility is a quality that has been absent from the diplomacy of George W. Bush. It is, however, a quality that will be indispensable in victory if we are to help rebuild Iraq after decades of tyrannical rule and to repair our own frayed relations with governments, peoples, and institutions around the world. Whatever one's views about this war, one must hope that its end comes swiftly and leaves behind less carnage than the sobriquet of "shock and awe" seemed at first to threaten. At this point, our military strategists have displayed more strategic intelligence and coördination than our diplomats. But no amount of military capacity or precision will get around the fact that an American presence in Baghdad will carry with it risks and responsibilities that will shape the future of the United States in the world. How the world comes to see this invasion—as a reckless imperial adventure or as a decisive attempt to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction and the brutal dictator who would not relinquish them—will be determined by the character of its aftermath.

The debates during the Presidential campaign of 2000 only superficially addressed foreign policy, but in one of them Bush did promise humility in dealing with other countries. "If we're an arrogant nation, they'll resent us," he said. "If we're a humble nation but strong, they'll welcome us. We've got to be humble yet project strength in a way that promotes freedom." The rhetoric may not have matched Eisenhower's eloquence at Guildhall, but it was the right idea.



Beyond that, it was hard to discern the contours of Bush's foreign-policy thinking, even after he became President. Bush had been depicted, roughly but fairly, as a lightly travelled governor who, despite his lineage, could name hardly a foreign leader or capital, and who wore, as a badge of populist authenticity, a curious pride in his own incuriosity. None of the Presidential debates and little of the public discussion touched on the dramatic historical shift that had been taking place in the world since 1989. The collapse of the Soviet imperium marked the end of a civil war in the West—a civil war that had lasted upward of two centuries—between virulent illiberalism and political democracy. In the last, cold battle of that civil war, which stretched from Yalta to the breach-

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ing of the Berlin Wall, Western Europe recovered and thrived under the protection of the United States. American troops and American arms were insurance against Soviet ambition. There were ruinous, shameful episodes of American policy in those years—in Iran, in Vietnam, in Chile. But the sustaining of America's bonds with Europe, along with the creation of myriad institutions of international coöperation, provided the center and the soul of global stability.

With the vanishing of the Soviet threat, European bonds with Washington—bonds that inspired friendship and gratitude but also restlessness and even resentment—began, naturally, to loosen. Europe moved steadily toward economic and then political integration, toward a sense of itself as a friendly counterweight to American power and as an alternative political model, a prototype of supranational demilitarized democracy. The diplomats of the first Bush Administration and of the two Clinton Administrations recognized this historical drift but worked hard to prevent its hastening or its descent into outright hostility. The arrangements that followed the Second World War—among them NATO, the United Nations (with all its limitations), the Bretton Woods system of economic coöperation—were to be valued and updated. The Iraq crisis, as it has been articulated and managed by a highly ideological Administration under George W. Bush, has changed everything. What had been a relatively benign trend has become a rupture, endangering one relationship and one transatlantic institution after another.

There is, to be sure, division in the Bush Administration over this very problem. The conservative ideologues—Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, Donald Rumsfeld—came to power with a grand, unilateralist project and a palpable distaste for international institutions and alliances. Colin Powell, on the other hand, was a traditional Atlanticist, and his personal experience as a combat veteran long ago taught him that the Big Stick is not a magic wand. As for the President himself, his obsession with these matters for the first eight months of his Administration was, to be charitable, limited. Before September 11, 2001, his foreign policy seemed to be one of armed isolationism—of withdrawal from entangling obligations behind a scrim of bluster and anti-missile technology. After September 11th, the expectation that this would change was nearly universal. The global threat seemed to require a global response; to fight terrorism without allies would be absurd, the national-security equivalent of the Hawley-Smoot tariff. At times, the Administration has appeared to understand this, but the habit of self-isolation persists. Our most wrenching diplomatic trials lately have been with the French, and yet President Bush has not spoken to President Chirac in the past six weeks. At the Pentagon, Donald Rumsfeld has seemed to take a smug pleasure in mocking "old Europe," and even in doubting the value of our singular and principled ally, Tony Blair. In expression and action alike, Rumsfeld has appeared determined to couple the Administration's disdain for multilateral agreements with a disdain for the countries themselves.

While Germany may have become as persistently pacifist as it is reliably democratic (all in all, not such a bad thing), France and Russia brought their own agendas to the U.N. debate on Iraq. The French have been in a struggle with the Anglophone powers for centuries; our arguments with modern France, on everything from the administration of NATO to the targeting of bombs in the Balkans, have been a constant, but tolerable, irritation. Russia, which is led by a former colonel of the K.G.B., still deeply resents its decline, and what it sees as a string of broken American promises. At various points, we promised *not* to hasten the unification of Germany, *not* to expand NATO, *not* to dispense with the A.B.M. treaty. In each case, we did what we wanted, simply because we felt it was in our interest and because we could. The new conservative theology too often seems to combine power with a preening delight in brandishing it; the very notion of coöperation is suspect.

If the war in Iraq is to be rescued from the impulse to make it part of a grander imperial project, then figures like Powell and Blair are going to have to take control of the direction of the process that might be called reconstruction: reconstruction of Iraq, reconstruction of the international system, and reconstruction of the image and prestige of the United States and (to a lesser extent) of Great Britain.

Even as cruise missiles are in the air, the papers are hinting at dispiriting details of the Administration's version of reconstruction. A news story by Neil King, Jr., in the *Wall Street Journal* last week described how the U.S. government is taking bids in the hundreds of millions of dollars from American corporations wishing to rebuild the Iraqi infrastructure; the inside track on the bidding, King reports, appears to have already been seized by Halliburton, a former employer of the Vice-President, and other companies whose enthusiasm for the Republican Party has yielded a fortune in campaign donations. This is not an edifying spectacle. What's more, if the world begins to see that American companies are suddenly getting privileged access to Iraqi wells, every "blood for oil" suspicion of conspiracy will be vindicated.

The Administration hawks seem oblivious, too, of the consequences of a unilateral, imperial-style occupation of Iraq. They welcome it. By embracing imperialism frankly—by proclaiming that the goal of their policy is the maintenance and expansion of unchallenged power—they congratulate themselves as honest and hardheaded. (No mewling about the world community, or about democracy on any terms but their own.) But Americans don't like to think of themselves as being in the empire business. In the not so long run, an imperial vision will go down no better in the Middle West than in the Middle East. America's action will inspire a great deal more ill will in the Islamic world, and in Europe as well, if Washington is inconstant in its commitment to rebuild Baghdad or if it does not invite help from other countries and from international institutions. The United States has acted abroad before without the U.N.'s sanction, but it has never before so concertedly sought its blessing and then, not liking the result, contravened its will. The war may yet justify itself to some of its early opponents, especially as weapons are discovered and the oppressed of Iraq are suddenly free to describe the horrors of life under Saddam. (Every closed and tyrannical society reveals itself upon collapse to be worse than most could imagine.) But to ignore the wound this episode has already caused and to fail to heal it would amount to heedless diplomatic arrogance. Just as we

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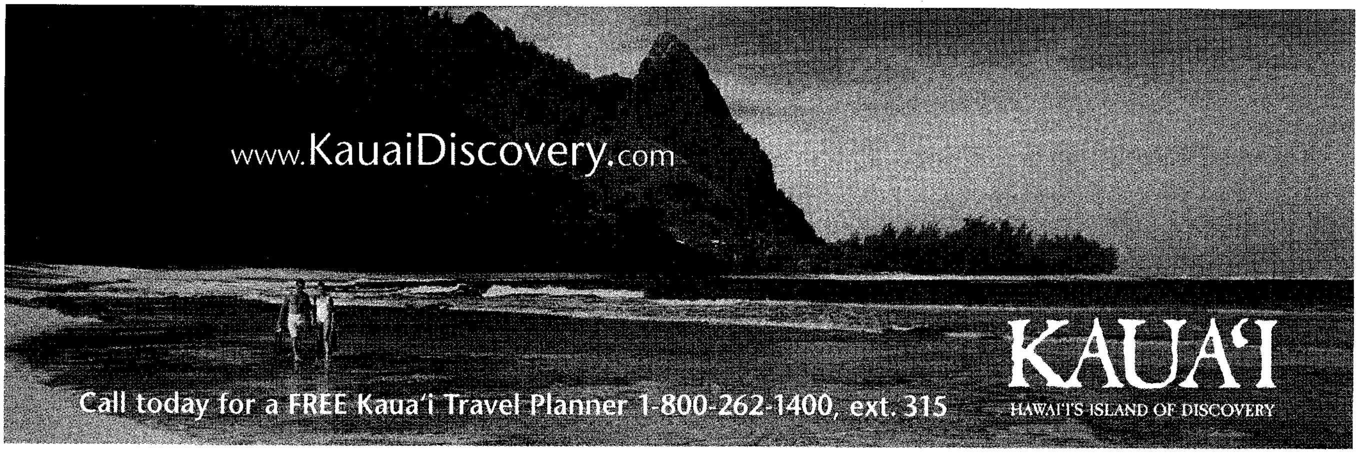
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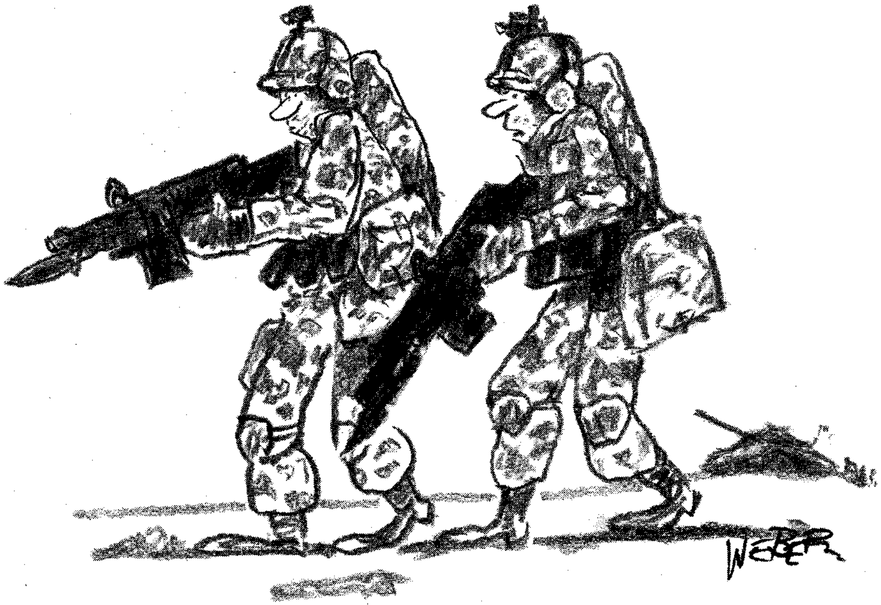

"I never cared much for apple pie, and, as for mother, the less said the better."

• •

welcomed the aid of the Europeans and the Japanese in the Balkans and in Afghanistan, we should want—and will need—their help in rebuilding Iraq.

There are many gestures of ordinary diplomatic courtesy and engagement that can help in the future—the President might start with a great many more invitations and foreign trips—but there are also acts of diplomatic courage that will be required to alter our caricature as a conquistador of the modern Middle East. Primary among these is a serious reëngagement with the Israeli-Palestinian problem. As Bill Clinton and Ehud Barak will attest, a leap of faith is no guarantee of success, but a willingness to let events—as guided by Yasir Arafat and Ariel Sharon—simply take their course is a guarantee of more corpses, terror, reprisal, insecurity, and an ever-deepening hatred. Another act of courage that will demand fortitude is the dismantling of the American military bases in Saudi Arabia—not because it will please the zealots of Al Qaeda but because it will remove a destabilizing presence.

The world will never return precisely to the old postwar arrangements. Europe will continue its march to integration. The United States will continue to form new ties. But the nature of that march and those ties will define the future. Last Tuesday, in the House of Commons, under tremendous pressure from the British public and his own party, Tony Blair set out the case for action against Saddam Hussein with infinitely more detail, intelligence, and clarity than anyone in the Bush Administration has seen fit to do. His thoughts, however, were not only on the resort to arms but also on the day after. This moment in history is no mere incident, he made clear; rather, "it will determine the pattern of international politics for the next generation."

Blair, like Eisenhower, has all along grasped the gulf between triumph and triumphalism. The first combines humility with strength; the latter, if the White House indulges it, augurs isolation and disaster.

—*David Remnick*

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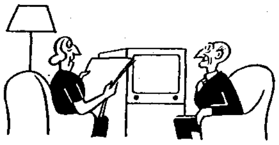
TV GOES TO WAR



"Shock and awe": it was no euphemism. Not since September 11, 2001, has the world seen images of such tremendous devastation occurring in such an unbelievably short amount of time. Beginning at around 9 P.M. in Baghdad on Friday, as many as two dozen buildings were destroyed in spectacular fashion in mere minutes, by some three hundred cruise missiles. The veteran war correspondent Peter Arnett, reporting by telephone from Baghdad, was no more able to find original words for the event than the rest of us were, and resorted to the now common cliché used to convey the magnitude of man-made disasters in terms that American audiences can understand: "It's like an action movie, only this is real." The silent green static images of Baghdad that we'd been seeing from locked-down nightscope cameras for the previous twenty-four hours gave way to live footage, courtesy of Abu Dhabi TV and Al Jazeera, showing huge, incongruously pink clouds rising from blown-up buildings, with accompanying booms that seemed to rock the ground under you, wherever in the world you happened to be. At a press briefing half an hour later, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld declared that the weapons used in this campaign did their job with pinpoint accuracy. It was a reassuring statement—or so it was meant to be—and also a chilling one, as he followed it with the announcement that the two-minute apocalyptic bombing was just the beginning of the air war in Iraq. People hearing this news could be forgiven for feeling an aftershock of shock and awe, for the barrage they had just seen looked and sounded not like the beginning of anything but the end of everything.

"Coalition of the willing"; "target of opportunity"; "decapitation strike"—this war has already given rise to a number of memorable phrases. The word "embed" has been put to a new use, too, describing the placement of hundreds of reporters with military units. Two hours after Friday's strike on Baghdad, a reporter on the U.S.S. Constellation, in the Persian Gulf, was on hand to explain the loud noise made by a returning warplane as it landed on the aircraft carrier. The Pentagon's decision to allow reporters to virtually join the armed forces was a good one, though of course, in addition to being a boon to the news business, it has public-relations benefits for the military. If today's weapons really are as microsurgically precise as we have been told they are, perhaps we will see that it's possible to conduct a war with little collateral damage, and perhaps we will be less likely in the future to question those who get us into wars. For reporters, it is a chance to convey the minute-by-minute reality of war in a way that no one has ever been able to do; and we at home have been able to watch history as it happens, instead of years later, after someone has pieced together footage for the History Channel.

We can learn a lot from this kind of coverage, but there is the danger of our becoming too fascinated by the level of detail we have the privilege of seeing, and of becoming passive, follow-along tacticians. A little channel surfing will get you a lot: the tanks of the cavalry rolling north on that vast expanse of sand in southern Iraq (tanks and goats and sand was the specialty of the day on Thursday on CNN); the men of the 101st Airborne Division hunkering down near a bunker; Geraldo Rivera in Afghanistan, ringed by a handful of armed soldiers, who appear to be protecting him while he's on the air; and reporters in the oil fields near Kirkuk, on the road with the infantry, and in the desert in Kuwait, talking through gas masks. The reporters, embedded as they are in the lives of the soldiers they are covering, are in some cases giving us too sentimental an education. On Friday, a CNN reporter in Iraq talked about how the soldiers were professionals, saying, "They do what most of us can't do." He added that "they cause death, but then there's the human part"—at which point he handed the microphone to two soldiers so that they could say hello to the folks at home. Reporters have taken to using military slang—on Thursday, a Fox News correspondent, instead of saying that ground troops had landed, went native and said, "There are boots on the ground," and another reporter talked about American troops "mopping up" Iraqi resistance.

Secretary Rumsfeld made the point at his briefing on Friday that what we're seeing on TV is not the whole war: "What we're seeing are slices of the war." In other words, it's not just a matter of tanks and bombs; there is a larger objective. Whether or not you agree with Rumsfeld's objective, the totality of the war is bigger than its front-line details, newsworthy though those details are. That totality is something that the news organizations have so far given scant attention to—we've seen little coverage of the war's opponents or of the global political ramifications, and even after Friday's strikes there was almost no mention of Iraqi casualties. (On Friday night, CNN did show footage of protests around the world—and followed it with a segment called "Decapitation 101.") In the days and weeks to come, reporters will have to try not to become intoxicated by the unprecedented access they have been granted, and the organizations they work for are going to have to try to remember that patriotism has nothing to do with slapping an image of the American flag on the screen alongside their logos, and that freedom of the press is ultimately something that can't be taken away—or given—by the Pentagon.

—*Nancy Franklin*

ON THE WEB

A BAGHDAD BLOGGER

During the past five months, a Manhattan office worker named Diane has exchanged nearly a hundred e-mails with Salam, a young architect in Baghdad. She is an unmarried Jew who lives on the Upper West Side; he is a closeted gay Iraqi from a wealthy family. What unites them is the fact that they are both the secret authors of blogs—Internet diaries that allow them to share their pent-up thoughts with the masses. Diane uses her Web site to express caustic opinions about the Middle East crisis. Salam's blog, which has somehow avoided being shut down by the Iraqi regime, is devoted to letting the world know how awful it is to be governed by "freaks" like Saddam Hussein (and how the only thing that's worse is having his home town pummelled by American bombs). Although Salam and Diane often disagree about politics—Diane supports the war, for example—they are fellow-cynics who have rapidly become confidants.

The day after the Bush Administration began its aerial attack on Baghdad, Diane was relieved to see that Salam was unharmed, and that, almost as important, he remained connected to the Web. (Iraq's official Internet service, Uruklink, was still providing spotty service.) Salam's site appears to be the only blog written by an Iraqi citizen.

"These first bombs completely missed his neighborhood," Diane said, sitting in front of her office computer, which was fringed with magenta Post-it notes. After closing the door, she said that nobody she worked with knew about her friendship with Salam or about her blog, which she calls Letter from Gotham. "I enjoy living this sort of parallel life," she said.

In his new posting, Salam had noted with relief that the bombing was "not yet comparable to what was going on in '91." He described wandering around town with his father after daybreak, looking for an open bakery. He wrote about Saddam's most recent speech, and noted, sarcastically, "This morning, he's got verse in it!!" Salam seemed starved for information. Iraqi television, he wrote, "says nothing, shows nothing." His family had furtively hooked up a forbidden satellite dish in the hope of picking up the BBC.

Diane had just received a personal message from Salam in which he referred to the first American bombs as "fireworks." She began typing a hasty response. "The bombing campaign will start in earnest tomorrow," she wrote. She paused briefly before pounding out, "I hate those silly people who tell you to stay safe, but stay safe."

Much of the appeal of Salam's blog lies in his brash sense of humor. He calls himself a "heretic fag" and confesses to having his own "ABBA costume." Complaining about government rations, he wrote, "We have been getting really nasty Egyptian soap. I am sure they wouldn't wash their tiled floor with it for fear of corrosion, but it is good enough for Iraqis." And he groused about finding a cockroach inside a bottle of Iraqi beer.

Seditious postings like these are unlikely to be tolerated by Iraq's secret police. In Salam's first private e-mail to Diane, in October, he confided that, if the Mukhabarat found out about the blog, "I'd be pasta sauce." Fortunately, he added, "the Internet thing is so new here they don't really know how to control this."

Although Salam hasn't included many details that would betray his identity, he sent Diane an e-mail in November entitled "Things I Shouldn't Tell You." His mother was a Shiite, he said; his father was a Sunni. When Salam was a child, the family spent several years in Europe, where he discovered that he had a talent for foreign languages and acquired a skeptical view of religion. His family returned to Iraq a few years before the Gulf

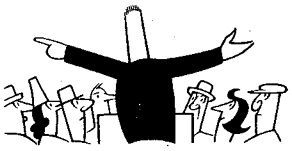
War. Salam said that his present job, for the Baghdad office of a Lebanese architectural firm, required him to travel to Beirut on occasion, which allowed him to "keep in touch with the rest of the world." He said that he was unwilling to become an exile; he loves his family too much. "I am better off than most—I should shut up and never ever complain," he said, noting that he is a member of a very powerful family. (On his blog, he goes by the name Salam Pax. Diane prefers to call him Salam, Queen of the Desert.)

Some readers have questioned the authenticity of Salam's blog. "At first, I wondered if he was a C.I.A. agent or something," Diane admitted. But she is now convinced that he's real. For one thing, Salam doesn't follow any clear ideological line; he is both anti-Saddam and anti-American. Diane also believes that "the details he gives about Baghdad are too convincing to be fake." In one posting, Salam vividly described the son of the Iraqi defense minister "driving that fancy car around Arasat Street intimidating everybody like all good sons of ministers do." And he has offered withering dissections of the propaganda that appears on Iraq's state-run television networks.

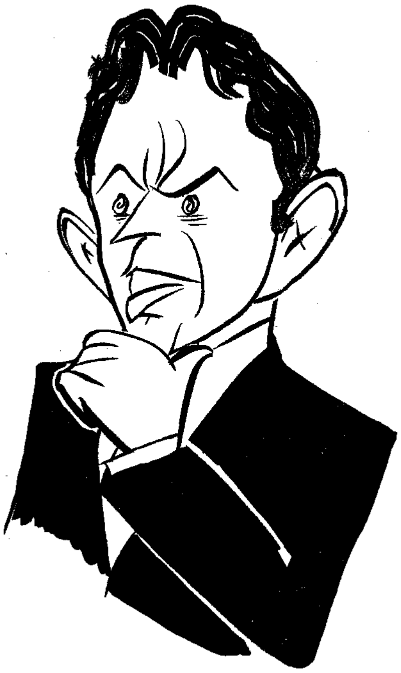
Last month, Salam mailed Diane some ceramic tiles. He also sent her digital photographs of himself. She pulled up three images of a plump, balding, genial-looking man. Smiling at one of the pictures, which appeared to have been taken in front of a shower curtain, Diane said she doubted that Salam's Internet connection would last much longer. But she remained hopeful that their friendship would one day resume. "We've joked about my driving from Jerusalem to Baghdad," she said. "But, after the war ends, I really hope I get the chance to meet him."

—*Daniel Zalewski*

LONDON POSTCARD
THE PRIME MINISTER



In London, the cultural draw of the season has been the Titian exhibition at the National Gallery. The curators have gathered paintings that have not hung together for more than four hundred years, and the galleries are staying open four evenings a week to accommodate the throng. Visitors who pause before "The Death of Actaeon," in which a tumbling figure, half man, half deer, is savaged by pursuing hounds, could be forgiven for murmuring under their breath, "There goes Tony."



Tony Blair

The Prime Minister has been more besieged of late than at any time since he took office, in 1997. Actaeon got it in the neck because he caught sight of Diana enjoying a dip. There is no official record of Blair's having encountered George W. Bush in his bath, but the British leader is now paying the price, in a Europe newly suspicious of American motives, for treating the President both as an ally and as a friend. Saddam Hussein reputedly used a squad of look-alikes to take his place at sticky moments, a tactic that Blair may well have envied when, nine days before the onset of hostilities, he—and it was definitely he—entered a television studio that bristled with women voters. Daniel himself would have gazed with pity as they clawed at Blair's explanations for Britain's entry into the war. At the end, they put their paws together for a slow handclap.

This was an astounding reversal of fortune. It would be unfair to say that Tony Blair possesses feminine charms, but the platform on which he came to power—listening to the voice of the people, answering what he took to be their needs—was perhaps the least manly ever proposed by a British premier. Now, almost six years later, the voice of the people had risen to a screech. His appeal to young voters took a knock when thousands of children—schoolkids, not college rebels—grabbed an unscheduled day off and raged onto the streets. Whatever the point of New Labour had once been, it surely wasn't supposed to end with cops carting off truculent schoolgirls in Parliament Square.

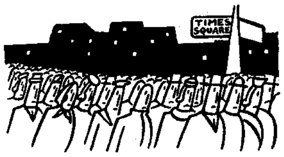
But Blair saw his chance. If your electorate turns into an unruly classroom, then, as any battle-hardened professor will confirm, the correct course of action is not to inquire politely into the students' feelings but to tell them what you are going to do and then do it. So the Prime Minister rose to his feet in the House of Commons on March 18th and gave the least tender and most efficacious speech of his career. There was, he made clear, one treacherous, obstructive, morality-free state, and it had pulled a reluctant world to the verge of bloodshed; that state was, of course, France. (French-bashing always gets a merry, glass-raising cheer in London; some years ago, a headline in the *Sun* newspaper instructed loyal readers to face East and "Bawl at Gaul.") Moving on, Blair came to Iraq, to the justice and wisdom of sending in British troops and to the consequences of letting Saddam go unpunished: "Who will celebrate and who will weep?"

As a rule, it is worth paying attention when a politician starts to speak as if he or she were translating from the Latin, and Blair sounded like a man who had spent the morning riffling through handbooks of classical rhetoric: "This indulgence has to stop. Because it is dangerous. It is dangerous if such regimes disbelieve us. Dangerous if they think they can use weakness, our hesitation, even the natural urges of our democracy towards peace, against us. Dangerous because one day they will mistake our innate revulsion against war for permanent incapacity."

He came to the end of his prepared text, but that didn't stop him. He winged it and won the day. As a political operator, Blair has long been charged with playing to the gallery, but not even the most frothing opponents of war could accuse him of supporting President Bush in a bid to curry favor with the public. The conclusion must be that, when Blair defends his committal of British troops on the ground that it is the right thing to do, he means it. He may yet be ripped open, like Actaeon; or, if the war is quick and triumphal, he may drink deep of Bacchus's river of wine and yank his clothes off, like one of the revellers in Titian's "The Andrians," although that seems unlikely. For the moment, however, the Titian that Tony Blair resembles most closely is the shadowed assailant known as "The Bravo," painted around 1517. We can barely see his face, but we see one of his hands resting firmly on the shoulder of another man, as if making an arrest, and another hand tucked behind his back. Just visible, in its grasp, is the hilt of a sword.

—Anthony Lane

IN MIDTOWN
THE PROTESTERS



Marchers converged on Times Square from every direction on Thursday afternoon. From the Farley Post Office, on Eighth Avenue, came New Yorkers Say No to War, Peace Initiative Turkey, and Code Pink: Women for Peace. The War Resisters League marched in from Bryant Park, Jews Against the Occupation from the New York Public Library, United for Peace and Justice from farther west on Forty-second Street. And up at Columbus Circle it was Youth Bloc and Carnival Bloc and Reclaim the Streets, gathered in freezing, slanting rain—a sodden mass of a few hundred people chanting and beating on homemade drums in, it seemed safe to surmise, a desperate effort both to stay warm and to raise their own spirits the day after American missiles started pounding Baghdad. "Drop Bush, Not Bombs!" they yelled. A mild-looking woman in a fishing cap held a poster up to the traffic peeling around the circle. On the poster was a picture of Pope John Paul II and, in vivid print, a creative rendition of the Vatican's stand: "This War Is Illegal, Immoral, Unjust." When I asked whether she belonged to any of the protest groups, the woman, her glasses streaked with rain, politely said that she did not, but that her daughter—she indicated the rocking mass—was in Youth Bloc.

It was time to march. Setting off down Broadway, past drawn-up lines of wet, unhappy-looking police, Emma Roderick, a fresh-faced senior at Hunter College High School and a Youth Bloc activist, said, "We don't think this will get them to pull out of Iraq or anything. But we hope we can help minimize civilian casualties, maybe discourage them from using nuclear weapons. Generally, they just need to be aware that there are still a lot of people against this war, even though it's started."

The foul-weather gear of choice seemed to be black Hefty bags; the favored noisemaker was an empty five-gallon plastic bucket slung from the neck and rhythmically thrashed with drumsticks. Past the Mony Group and the new headquarters of Random House, the ragged boa of protest shuffle-danced into the gloomy depths of midtown. Ahead lay the blazing lights of Times Square, first among them a vast white sign advertising, of all things, a Department of Homeland Security Web site—www.ready.gov—with the slogan "The Fight Against Terrorism Begins at Home."

The police steered the column east on Forty-eighth Street, then through several tight turns between blue barricades onto Seventh Avenue. There was shoving, and two marchers were quickly on the ground, faces on asphalt, with several police officers kneeling on their backs, slowly tying their wrists together with plastic restraints. "Arrest them all," a brave, possibly drunk bystander shouted.

Times Square was a canyon of sirens. Police cars and vans were parked everywhere. But underneath the scream of sirens was another sound, a deep bass roar—the columns of protesters arriving, surging against police lines from half a dozen directions, impatient to form one crowd. And flashing constantly above this Colosseum-like scene was electronic news, most of it war news: "U.S. HITS BAGHDAD; GROUND TROOPS CROSS BORDER."

Eventually, the police got all the columns of protesters herded into a "pen"—that's the technical term—which filled Broadway for several blocks south of Forty-second Street. A sound truck was set up, and speakers began to exhort the crowd, their shouts bouncing off the tall buildings around them. The protest had reached its destination—its message was now being distilled and delivered—but it had somehow lost its bounce, its rhythm, even its common sense. "We know even evil empires can be defeated," one woman bellowed. "And this movement has already accomplished so much. Now we've got to continue to build on our victories until our enemies in Washington, D.C., are totally defeated." Our victories? Some people applauded.

I slipped into a Godiva shop to warm up. The two workers behind the counter seemed startled to see me. There wasn't another customer in the place. They reluctantly agreed that the commotion outside was killing their business. I asked if they knew what it was about. They claimed not to know. "Guess they don't have jobs," said one of the chocolatiers, a big blond woman.

Back on the street, a performance artist was dancing, outside the demonstrators' pen. He wore a dark business suit and a big, wildly grinning George W. Bush mask, and he brandished a bright rubber classroom globe, caressing it extravagantly and crooning, "Mine! Mine! All mine!"

A few blocks up, I'd noticed a policewoman standing in the street in a phalanx of police keeping people on the sidewalk. Most of the cops were warily watching the demonstrators, but she was looking right over their heads. She was a strikingly beautiful woman, with dark skin, blond hair, huge eyes, and miraculous cheekbones. A photographer who was shooting the march said, "She's waiting to be discovered." But the glamorous policewoman was looking dreamily *at* something. And if you followed her gaze it was easy to see what it was: a big, brilliantly colored Ferris wheel turning inside an immense Toys R Us store. Baskets decorated with images of Tonka trucks, Cabbage Patch Kids, and Barbie were swinging gently through the megastore air, carrying groups of suburban-looking teen-agers talking on cell phones. I imagined that she was wishing she was one of those kids, instead of being out here in the cold, obliged to keep an eye on angry, anguished New Yorkers chanting against a war.

—William Finnegan

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ON THE TOWN

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LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

HOW IT CAME TO WAR

When did Bush decide that he had to fight Saddam?

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN

Washington had a vertiginous feeling last week as the endlessly debated war against Iraq finally began. For the previous six months, the capital had surely been the most pro-Iraq-war city in the world: George W. Bush had given a textbook demonstration of Presidential power in bringing Washington into a position of support—or, in the case of many of the Democrats, cowed silence—for a course of action that almost nobody had advocated when Saddam Hussein forced the United Nations weapons inspectors to leave, in 1998. There had been, from the Washington point of view, a satisfying rhythm to the run-up to war, beginning with Bush's speech to the United Nations in September, continuing through Saddam's forced readmission of the weapons inspectors in the fall, and culminating in Secretary of State Colin Powell's presentation of evidence against Saddam at the U.N. in early February, which, in Washington, at least, caused a wave of liberal capitulations to the cause of war.

STEVE
BRODNER

A senior official called Iraq's movement to the top of the priority list "a mystery."

STEVE BRODNER

Then, to the queasy surprise of the small community of people in Washington who follow American diplomacy with a sense of proprietary interest, things fell apart. There was much more opposition to the war than anybody had expected; seemingly reliable allies jumped ship; the coöperation of the Security Council became unattainable; even the impeccably loyal Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister, needed last-minute resuscitation, in the form of a

Presidential reiteration of support for Palestinian statehood. Recrimination between hawks and doves, over who was to blame for the failure of diplomacy, and gloom about the death of the international order were in the air—along with martial expectancy. Late Monday morning, after it was announced that President Bush would make a television address that evening, helicopters suddenly began patrolling the skies and streets were shut off. It turned out that a North Carolina tobacco farmer had driven his tractor into a pond on the Mall, but, before people knew that, the city had been alive with alarmed rumors: a peace protester was threatening to blow up the Washington Monument; a terrorist had driven a truck packed with explosives into the reflecting pool in front of the Capitol Building.

With the war only hours away from beginning, I had a long talk with a senior Administration official about how it had come about and what it seemed to portend.

"Before September 11th," the official said, "there wasn't a consensus Administration view about Iraq. This issue hadn't come to the fore, and you had Administration *views*. There were those who preferred regime change, and they were largely residing in the Pentagon, and probably in the Vice-President's office. At the State Department, the focus was on tightening up the containment regime—so-called 'smart sanctions.' The National Security Council didn't seem to have much of an opinion at that point. But the issue hadn't really been joined.

"Then, in the immediate aftermath of the eleventh, not that much changed. The focus was on Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden, Al Qaeda. Some initial attempts by Wolfowitz"—Paul Wolfowitz, the Deputy Secretary of Defense—"and others to draw Iraq in never went anywhere, because the link between Iraq and September 11th was, as far as we know, nebulous at most—nonexistent, for all intents and purposes. It's somewhere in the first half of 2002 that all this changed. The President internalized the idea of making regime change in Iraq a priority. What I can't explain to you is exactly the process that took us from the initial post-September 11th position, which was, Let's keep the focus on Al Qaeda and Afghanistan, to, say, nine months later, when Iraq had moved to the top of the priority list for us. That's a mystery that nobody has yet uncovered. It clearly has something to do with September 11th, and it's clearly consistent with the President's speech about weapons of mass destruction in the hands of rogues, people with a history of some terror—but, again, how it exactly happened, and what was the particular role of Cheney, among others, I wish you well in uncovering."

I wondered how the war looked to the American diplomatic community. "I think it's hard to generalize," the official said. "It's my sense that the arguments for going to war are strong enough that people feel comfortable. There's a good case for going to war. There's also a respectable case for not. But the case for going to war is strong enough that I don't think a lot of people at senior levels are going home unable to face themselves in the mirror. A lot of this comes down to how imminent a threat you feel Iraq poses. Everyone agrees that Saddam Hussein is truly evil. Everyone agrees he has these weapons of mass destruction. Everyone is concerned about what he might do with them. And so the real question is, Did we have to do something right away, with military force? Reasonable men and women can disagree, but I think the bottom line is, the arguments that have led the President to this point are strong enough that even those who tilt the other way can still acknowledge the validity of the arguments, and, indeed, even conclude that those who favor going to war now may well be right."

In terms of the future of American diplomacy, much depends on how the war effort goes. If things don't go well, the official said, "the price we pay is, first of all, the aftermath inside Iraq is likely to be more costly, in terms of how long, how many forces have to stay. It could be harder to put Iraq right, if what we inherit is a much more destroyed place. Second of all, we could find the world economy in much rougher straits. If things are messy and prolonged, we could find some friendly governments possibly overthrown, or at least in much worse shape. The U.S.'s reputation would be taking a battering. It's one thing if you challenge the conventional wisdom and are proved right. It's quite another"—he

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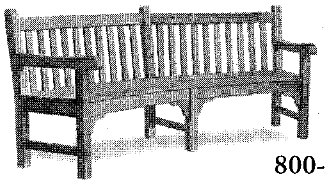

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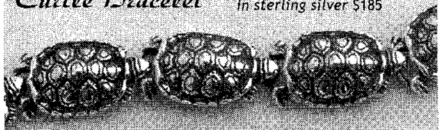

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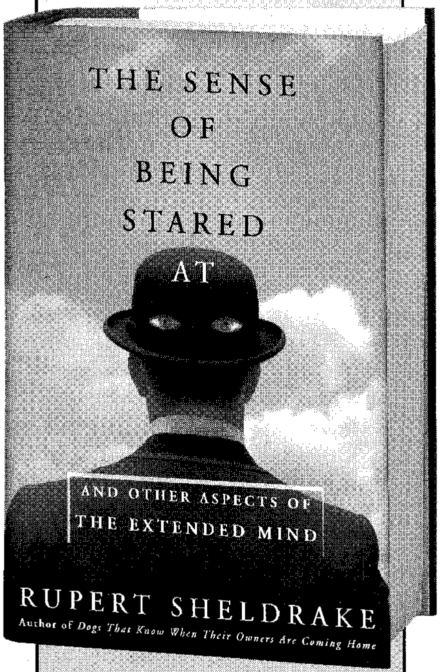
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chuckled mordantly—"if you challenge the conventional wisdom and the conventional wisdom proves to have been right. I just think America's reputation would have taken a real battering. We'd probably also find increased terrorist attacks, because we'd be seen not as invincible, and bogged down, and all that. This is all—this is a big throw of the dice."

An odd aspect of the Washington foreign-policy community during the last few months has been that there was less general enthusiasm for the war inside the government than you'd think, and more enthusiasm outside the government, which is where the Democratic foreign-policy specialists are now. Foreign-policy Democrats are a bit to the right of their party, because they feel that it tends to be too hesitant about the use of American power, and foreign-policy Republicans (excepting the hawks) are a bit to the left of theirs, because they feel that it undervalues diplomacy. The result is that the foreign-policy arms of the two parties form a continuum of opinion (excepting, again, the hawks), despite the custom that forbids those who have served in Administrations of one party from serving in Administrations of the other. The consensus after the expulsion of the weapons inspectors in 1998 was that Saddam Hussein was a bad actor, but that his misbehavior had not achieved the status of a grave international crisis. On the other hand, quite a few people in the Clinton Administration wanted to respond to him more forcefully than the United States actually did, with a four-day bombing campaign called Operation Desert Fox.

James Steinberg, who during the last years of the Clinton Administration was the No. 2 man at the National Security Council and is now the head of the foreign-policy division of the Brookings Institution, told me that he would have preferred to try to muster an international disarmament effort against Saddam. Then as now, the chief problem would have been persuading the French and the Russians. "We would have tried to go to the United Nations, but back it up with a more aggressive posture, including moving troops to the region," Steinberg said. "But a variety of factors made it impossible." He listed the war in Kosovo and Al Qaeda's bombing of the American embassies in East Africa as matters that took the focus away from Iraq—and, of course, Clinton had an especially weak hand during this period, because he was being impeached.

By the time of the 2000 Presidential campaign, the flurry of activity that followed the end of inspections had subsided, and on Iraq there was not much apparent difference between Clinton's position, Al Gore's position, and Bush's position. All three men were nominally for "regime change," without suggesting an immediate way to achieve it. "In any Administration, the question is, How do you raise an issue from one that people with a narrow portfolio worry about to one that people with a broad portfolio worry about," Stephen Sestanovich, another high diplomatic official in the Clinton Administration, whom I saw in Washington last week, told me. (Sestanovich now works at the Washington office of the Council on Foreign Relations.) "Iraq was a problem the regional specialists saw as very serious, but they could never get their argument accepted above the level of regional specialists." That was as true in the early Bush days as in the late Clinton ones.

Then, when Iraq did become an issue of Presidential importance, Washington followed George Bush's lead. The foreign-policy consensus shifted, from the view that Saddam represented a second-order-of-magnitude problem to the view that it was worth a war to get rid of him, but only if it was an international effort like the first Gulf War. And most people believed that's what would happen, once Bush had acceded to Colin Powell's request to go to the United Nations to line up support. Surely, people felt, the rest of the world would come around to the new American position—even the balky Russians and French. As Sestanovich put it, "The anti-American stance is a familiar French thing, not entirely cynical, not entirely principled. They'd know when to call it off. After they'd been French for a while, they'd stop being French. People thought they understood the limits of the game and it would be over at a certain point. And then it wasn't. And it turned out that the Russians were prepared to be French, as long as the French were being French."

So this was the dizzying progression in the Washington diplomatic world:

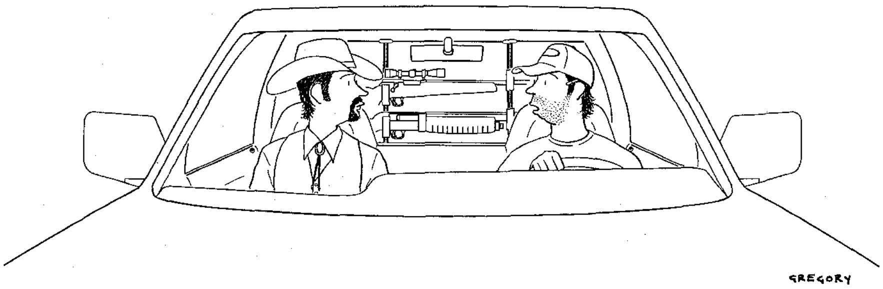
from believing that Saddam should be taken somewhat more seriously as a threat, to believing that an international coalition was going to oust him from power, to watching the coalition fall apart and the United States go to war anyway—and wondering whether it made a difference anymore what professional diplomats think.

Last week, I went to see Richard Haass, the director of the policy-planning staff at the State Department. Haass is probably the Administration's most prominent moderate theoretician and is a leading member of the foreign-policy establishment. Before joining the Bush Administration, he had held the job at the Brookings Institution which James Steinberg now holds. (And Steinberg formerly held Haass's job in the State Department.) Haass will soon be leaving government to take one of the foreign-policy world's plummiest jobs, as president of the Council on Foreign Relations, in New York. With his departure, it's hard to think of whom one could call a prominent moderate theoretician in the Bush Administration.

I arrived at the State Department on the day that President Bush made his televised address giving Saddam Hussein forty-eight hours to surrender power. The enormous, usually crowded lobby of the building was deserted, as if to manifest the succession of diplomacy by war. Haass seemed tired but not harried, as you would when a long period of intense preparation had ended and there was nothing left to do.

I asked him whether there had been a particular moment when he realized that war was definitely coming. "There was a moment," he said. "The moment was the first week of July, when I had a meeting with Condi"—Condoleezza Rice, Bush's national-security adviser. "Condi and I have regular meetings, once every month or so—she and I get together for thirty or forty-five minutes, just to review the bidding. And I raised this issue about were we really sure that we wanted to put Iraq front and center at this point, given the war on terrorism and other issues. And she said, essentially, that that decision's been made, don't waste your breath. And that was early July. But before that, in the months leading up to that, there had been various hints, just in what people were saying, how they were acting at various meetings. We were meeting about these issues in the spring of 2002, and my staff would come back to me and report that there's something in the air here. So there was a sense that it was gathering momentum, but it was hard to pin down. For me, it was that meeting with Condi that made me realize it was farther along than I had realized. So then when Powell had his famous dinner with the President, in early August, 2002"—in which Powell persuaded Bush to take the question to the U.N.—"the agenda was not whether Iraq, but how."

The long, gruelling effort at the U.N. now looked like a waste of time—or did Haass disagree? "That's too negative," he said. "Resolution 1441"—which the Security Council passed unanimously, and which reopened the weapons inspections in Iraq—"was an extraordinary achievement. It got inspectors back in under far more demanding terms. And it didn't tie our hands. We never committed ourselves to another resolution. So it was an extraordinary accomplishment. It gave tremendous legal and political and moral authority to anything that we would subsequently do. I don't see how anyone could fault that. Indeed, any problems we have today pale in comparison to the problems we would



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have had if we had not done 1441. Where we had problems was obviously in the aftermath, and the question is why. Well, to some extent, as we got closer to the reality of war, all the visceral antiwar feeling came out. The French and others who voted for 1441 are being disingenuous. When they voted for it, they knew damn well what serious consequences it would have. What they're doing is listening to their public opinion, rather than leading it."

There were other reasons besides French opposition that the American effort in the United Nations had failed, Haass said. "A lot of the resentment of American foreign policy over the last couple of years has coalesced. This has become a kind of magnet for resentment. I think we may have been hurt by having a policy toward the Israel-Palestine dispute that was perceived in much of Europe and the Middle East to be biased toward Israel. In any event, we ended up going for the second resolution, quite honestly, not because we needed it. It was seen as nice to have, from our point of view. It was seen as desirable. But it was something that Tony Blair and others felt very strongly that they needed in order to manage their domestic polities."

After months of official talk about removing Saddam from power, would the United States really have been willing to accept his remaining as the Iraqi head of state if he complied with the weapons inspectors? "That's a hypothetical," Haass said. "We said that we would have lived with it. My hunch is that, if you had had complete Iraqi coöperation and compliance, so we had eliminated to our satisfaction the W.M.D."—weapons of mass destruction—"threat, the question would be, Could Saddam Hussein have survived that? My hunch is, Saddam concluded he couldn't survive it, which is one of the reasons why we are where we are. It would have been such a loss of face. But, assuming it did not lead to regime change from within, I do not think we could or would have launched a war in those circumstances. Instead, if Saddam survived W.M.D. disarmament, we could have pursued regime change through other tools. That's why you have diplomacy, that's why you have propaganda, that's why you have covert operations, that's why you have sanctions. You have the rest of the tools. So my recommendations would have been, we pursue regime change and war-crimes prosecution—he still should have been responsible for war crimes—using other tools. But I think you had to reserve the military either for the W.M.D. issue or for incontrovertible evidence of support for terrorism."

Now people were saying that the United States, by deciding to abandon the Security Council negotiations, had done irreparable harm to the institutional stature of the United Nations. "We've not done irreparable harm to anything," Haass said. "In the case of the U.N., we've just once again learned the lesson that the U.N. can only function as an institution when there's consensus among the major powers. The U.N. was never meant to act with the independence of a nation-state. It was never meant to be the instrument of one great power against another. So, when the great powers can't agree, that's when they have to go outside the U.N. Otherwise they'll destroy the institution to make it relevant. You want to preserve it for those times when the differences between the powers are modest, or they actually agree."

Therefore, with the United States determined to go to war, it was imperative to avoid a vote on a second resolution, which might have failed and would have been vetoed even if it had passed. "This would have been a much more confrontational situation," Haass said. "We would have been acting against the U.N. Now we can argue that we are acting pursuant to the U.N., in 1441. This is a way, I believe, quite honestly, of preserving the U.N.'s potential viability in the future. We've not destroyed it. We've just admitted, though, that it can't do everything, when the great powers of the day disagree."

Now that the war is under way, the Washington foreign-policy consensus has shifted again, to the point that Haass's position on the future of the U.N.—indeed, the future of the United States as a member of lasting alliances—would seem overoptimistic to many people. Washington has stopped debating the merits of the real war in Iraq (that's one for demonstrators in the streets, not policymakers in offices) and has begun to focus on a possible one in North Korea. ♦

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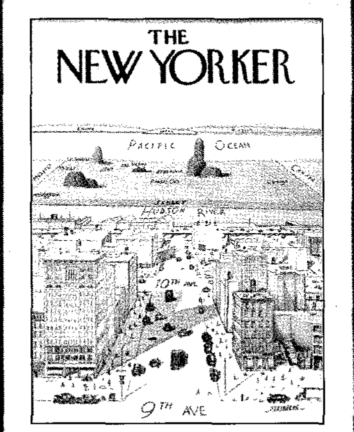

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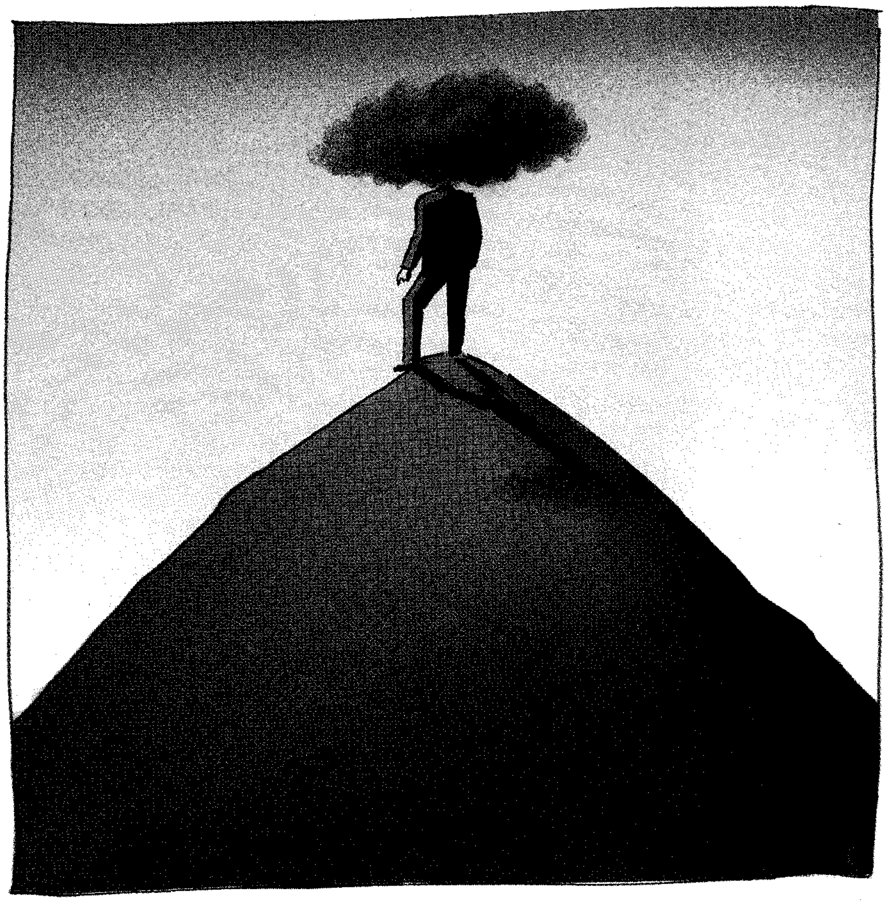
ANNALS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

WHO LIED TO WHOM?

Why did the Administration endorse a forgery about Iraq's nuclear program?

BY SEYMOUR M. HERSH



The fabrications "could be spotted by someone using Google," an official said.

GUY BILLOUT

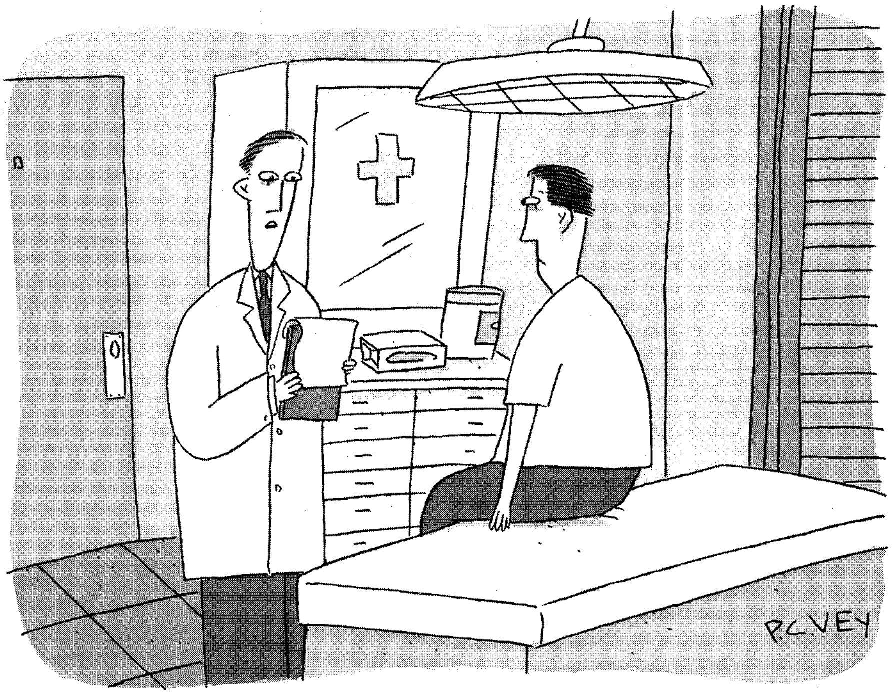
Last September 24th, as Congress prepared to vote on the resolution authorizing President George W. Bush to wage war in Iraq, a group of senior intelligence officials, including George Tenet, the Director of Central Intelligence, briefed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Iraq's weapons capability. It was an important presentation for the Bush Administration. Some Democrats were publicly questioning the President's claim that Iraq still possessed weapons of mass destruction which posed an immediate threat to the United States. Just the day before, former Vice-President Al Gore had sharply criticized the Administration's advocacy of preëmptive war, calling it a doctrine that would replace "a world in which states consider themselves subject to law" with "the notion that there is no law but the discretion of the President of the United States." A few Democrats were also considering putting an alternative resolution before Congress.

According to two of those present at the briefing, which was highly classified and took place in the committee's secure hearing room, Tenet declared, as he had done before, that a shipment of high-strength aluminum tubes that was intercepted on its way to Iraq had been meant for the construction of centrifuges that could be used to produce enriched uranium. The suitability of the tubes for that purpose had been disputed, but this time the argument that Iraq had a nuclear program under way was buttressed by a new and striking fact: the C.I.A. had recently received intelligence showing that, between 1999 and 2001, Iraq had attempted to buy five hundred tons of uranium oxide from Niger, one of the world's largest producers. The uranium, known as "yellow cake," can be used to make fuel for nuclear reactors; if processed differently, it can also be enriched to make weapons. Five tons can produce enough weapon-grade uranium for a bomb. (When the C.I.A. spokesman William Harlow was asked for comment, he denied that Tenet had briefed the senators on Niger.)

On the same day, in London, Tony Blair's government made public a dossier containing much of the information that the Senate committee was being given in secret—that Iraq had sought to buy "significant quantities of uranium" from an unnamed African country, "despite having no active civil nuclear power programme that could require it." The allegation attracted immediate attention; a headline in the London *Guardian* declared, "AFRICAN GANGS OFFER ROUTE TO URANIUM."

Two days later, Secretary of State Colin Powell, appearing before a closed hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, also cited Iraq's attempt to obtain uranium from Niger as evidence of its persistent nuclear ambitions. The testimony from Tenet and Powell helped to mollify the Democrats, and two weeks later the resolution passed overwhelmingly, giving the President a congressional mandate for a military assault on Iraq.

On December 19th, Washington, for the first time, publicly identified Niger as the alleged seller of the nuclear materials, in a State Department position paper that rhetorically asked, "Why is the Iraqi regime hiding their uranium procurement?" (The charge was denied by both Iraq and Niger.) A former high-level intelligence official told me that the information on Niger was judged serious enough to include in the President's Daily Brief, known as the P.D.B., one of the most sensitive intelligence documents in the American system. Its information is supposed to be carefully analyzed, or "scrubbed." Distribution of the two- or three-page early-morning report, which is prepared by the C.I.A., is limited to the President and a few other senior officials. The P.D.B. is not made available, for example, to any members of the Senate or House Intelligence Committees. "I don't think anybody here sees that thing," a



"Your DNA doesn't match your credit history."

• •

State Department analyst told me. "You only know what's in the P.D.B. because it echoes—people talk about it."

President Bush cited the uranium deal, along with the aluminum tubes, in his State of the Union Message, on January 28th, while crediting Britain as the source of the information: "The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa." He commented, "Saddam Hussein has not credibly explained these activities. He clearly has much to hide."

Then the story fell apart. On March 7th, Mohamed ElBaradei, the director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, in Vienna, told the U.N. Security Council that the documents involving the Niger-Iraq uranium sale were fakes. "The I.A.E.A. has concluded, with the concurrence of outside experts, that these documents . . . are in fact not authentic," ElBaradei said.

One senior I.A.E.A. official went further. He told me, "These documents are so bad that I cannot imagine that they came from a serious intelligence agency. It depresses me, given the low quality of the documents, that it was not stopped. At the level it reached, I would have expected more checking."

The I.A.E.A. had first sought the documents last fall, shortly after the British government released its dossier. After months of pleading by the I.A.E.A., the United States turned them over to Jacques Baute, who is the director of the agency's Iraq Nuclear Verification Office.

It took Baute's team only a few hours to determine that the documents were fake. The agency had been given about a half-dozen letters and other communications between officials in Niger and Iraq, many of them written on letterheads of the Niger government. The problems were glaring. One letter, dated October 10, 2000, was signed with the name of Allele Habibou, a Niger Minister of Foreign Affairs and Coöperation, who had been out of office since 1989. Another letter, allegedly from Tandja Mamadou, the President of Niger, had a signature that had obviously been faked and a text with inaccuracies so egregious, the senior I.A.E.A. official said, that "they could be spotted by someone using Google on the Internet."

The large quantity of uranium involved should have been another warning sign. Niger's "yellow cake" comes from two uranium mines controlled by a French company, with its entire output presold to nuclear power companies in France, Japan, and Spain. "Five hundred tons can't be siphoned off without anyone noticing," another I.A.E.A. official told me.

This official told me that the I.A.E.A. has not been able to determine who actually prepared the documents. "It could be someone who intercepted faxes in Israel, or someone at the headquarters of the Niger Foreign Ministry, in Niamey. We just don't know," the official said. "Somebody got old letterheads and signatures, and cut and pasted." Some I.A.E.A. investigators suspected that the inspiration for the documents was a trip that the Iraqi Ambassador to Italy took to several African countries, including Niger, in February, 1999. They also speculated that MI6—the branch of British intelligence responsible for foreign operations—had become involved, perhaps through contacts in Italy, after the Ambassador's return to Rome.

Baute, according to the I.A.E.A. official, "confronted the United States with the forgery: 'What do you have to say?' They had nothing to say."

ElBaradei's disclosure has not been disputed by any government or intelligence official in Washington or London. Colin Powell, asked about the forgery during a television interview two days after ElBaradei's report, dismissed the subject by saying, "If that issue is resolved, that issue is resolved." A few days later, at a House hearing, he denied that anyone in the United States government had anything to do with the forgery. "It came from other sources," Powell testified. "It was provided in good faith to the inspectors."

The forgery became the object of widespread, and bitter, questions in Europe about the credibility of the United States. But it initially provoked only a few news stories in America, and little sustained questioning about how the White House could endorse such an obvious fake. On March 8th, an American official who had reviewed the documents was quoted in the Washington *Post* as explaining, simply, "We fell for it."

The Bush Administration's reliance on the Niger documents may, however, have stemmed from more than bureaucratic carelessness or political overreaching. Forged documents and false accusations have been an element in

U.S. and British policy toward Iraq at least since the fall of 1997, after an impasse over U.N. inspections. Then as now, the Security Council was divided, with the French, the Russians, and the Chinese telling the United States and the United Kingdom that they were being too tough on the Iraqis. President Bill Clinton, weakened by the impeachment proceedings, hinted of renewed bombing, but, then as now, the British and the Americans were losing the battle for international public opinion. A former Clinton Administration official told me that London had resorted to, among other things, spreading false information about Iraq. The British propaganda program—part of its Information Operations, or I/Ops—was known to a few senior officials in Washington. "I knew that was going on," the former Clinton Administration official said of the British efforts. "We were getting ready for action in Iraq, and we wanted the Brits to prepare."

Over the next year, a former American intelligence officer told me, at least one member of the U.N. inspection team who supported the American and British position arranged for dozens of unverified and unverifiable intelligence reports and tips—data known as inactionable intelligence—to be funnelled to MI6 operatives and quietly passed along to newspapers in London and elsewhere. "It was intelligence that was crap, and that we couldn't move on, but the Brits wanted to plant stories in England and around the world," the former officer said. There was a series of clandestine meetings with MI6, at which documents were provided, as well as quiet meetings, usually at safe houses in the Washington area. The British propaganda scheme eventually became known to some members of the U.N. inspection team. "I knew a bit," one official still on duty at U.N. headquarters acknowledged last week, "but I was never officially told about it."

None of the past and present officials I spoke with were able to categorically state that the fake Niger documents were created or instigated by the same propaganda office in MI6 that had been part of the anti-Iraq propaganda wars in the late nineteen-nineties. (An MI6 intelligence source declined to comment.) Press reports in the United States and elsewhere have suggested other possible sources: the Iraqi exile community, the Italians, the French. What is generally agreed upon, a congressional intelligence-committee staff member told me, is that the Niger documents were initially circulated by the British—President Bush said as much in his State of the Union speech—and that "the Brits placed more stock in them than we did." It is also clear, as the former high-level intelligence official told me, that "something as bizarre as Niger raises suspicions everywhere."

What went wrong? Did a poorly conceived propaganda effort by British intelligence, whose practices had been known for years to senior American officials, manage to move, without significant challenge, through the top layers of the American intelligence community and into the most sacrosanct of Presidential briefings? Who permitted it to go into the President's State of the Union speech? Was the message—the threat posed by Iraq—more important than the integrity of the intelligence-vetting process? Was the Administration lying to itself? Or did it deliberately give Congress and the public what it knew to be bad information?

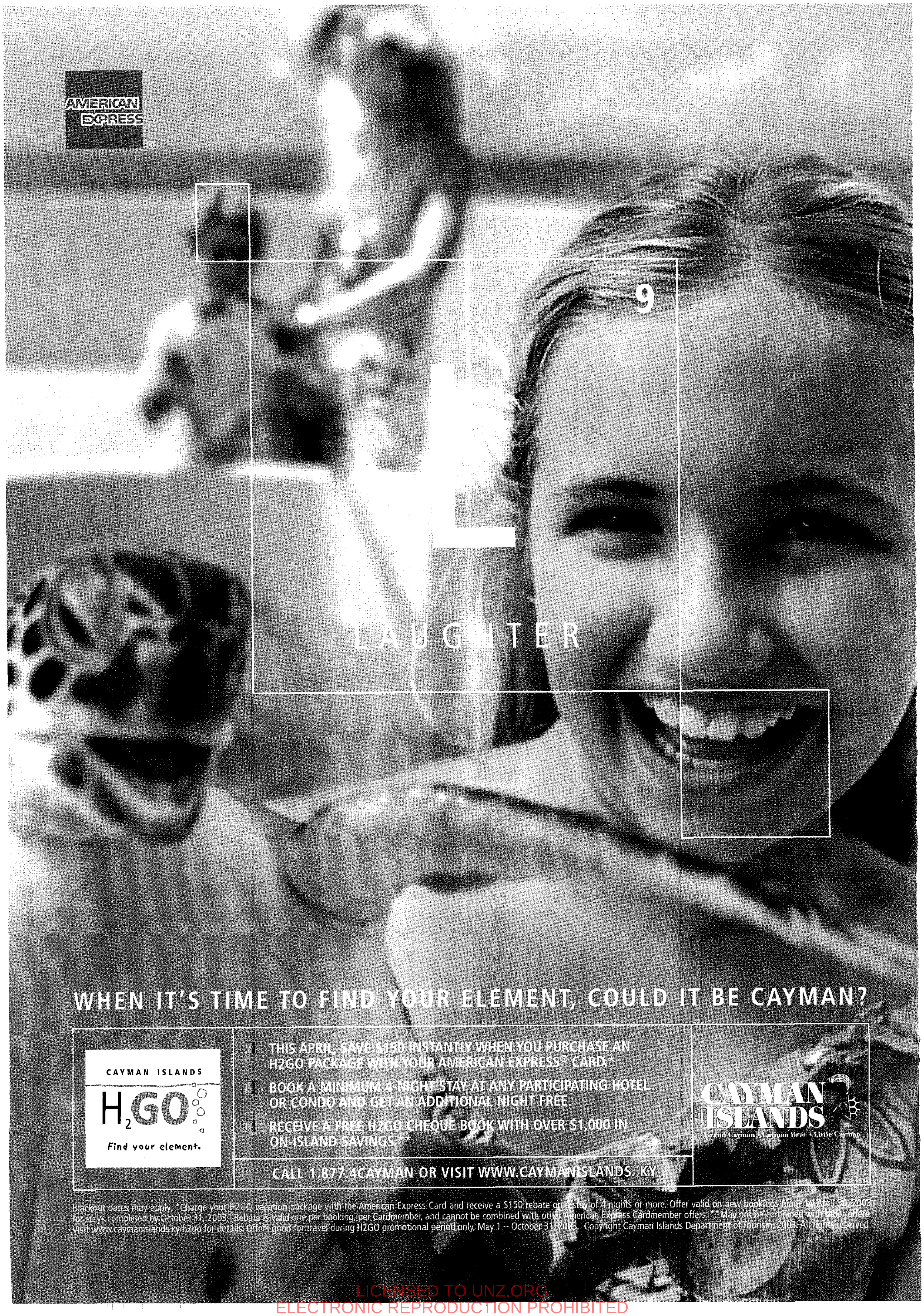
Asked to respond, Harlow, the C.I.A. spokesman, said that the agency had not obtained the actual documents until early this year, after the President's State of the Union speech and after the congressional briefings, and therefore had been unable to evaluate them in a timely manner. Harlow refused to respond to questions about the role of Britain's MI6. Harlow's statement does not, of course, explain why the agency left the job of exposing the embarrassing forgery to the I.A.E.A. It puts the C.I.A. in an unfortunate position: it is, essentially, copping a plea of incompetence.

The chance for American intelligence to challenge the documents came as the Administration debated whether to pass them on to ElBaradei. The former high-level intelligence official told me that some senior C.I.A. officials were aware that the documents weren't trustworthy. "It's not a question as to whether they were marginal. They can't be 'sort of' bad, or 'sort of' ambiguous. They knew it was a fraud—it was useless. Everybody bit their tongue and said, 'Wouldn't it be great if the Secretary of State said this?' The Secretary of State never saw the documents." He added, "He's absolutely apoplectic about it." (A State Department spokesman was unable to comment.) A former intelligence officer told me that some questions about the authenticity of the Niger documents were raised inside the government by analysts at the Department of Energy and the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research. However, these warnings were not heeded.

"Somebody deliberately let something false get in there," the former high-level intelligence official added. "It could not have gotten into the system without the agency being involved. Therefore it was an internal intention. Someone set someone up." (The White House declined to comment.)

Washington's case that the Iraqi regime had failed to meet its obligation to give up weapons of mass destruction was, of course, based on much more than a few documents of questionable provenance from a small African nation. But George W. Bush's war against Iraq has created enormous anxiety throughout the world—in part because one side is a superpower and the other is not. It can't help the President's case, or his international standing, when his advisers brief him with falsehoods, whether by design or by mistake.

On March 14th, Senator Jay Rockefeller, of West Virginia, the senior Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, formally asked Robert Mueller, the F.B.I. director, to investigate the forged documents. Rockefeller had voted for the resolution authorizing force last fall. Now he wrote to Mueller, "There is a possibility that the fabrication of these documents may be part of a larger deception campaign aimed at manipulating public opinion and foreign policy regarding Iraq." He urged the F.B.I. to ascertain the source of the documents, the skill-level of the forgery, the motives of those responsible, and "why the intelligence community did not recognize the documents were fabricated." A Rockefeller aide told me that the F.B.I. had promised to look into it. ♦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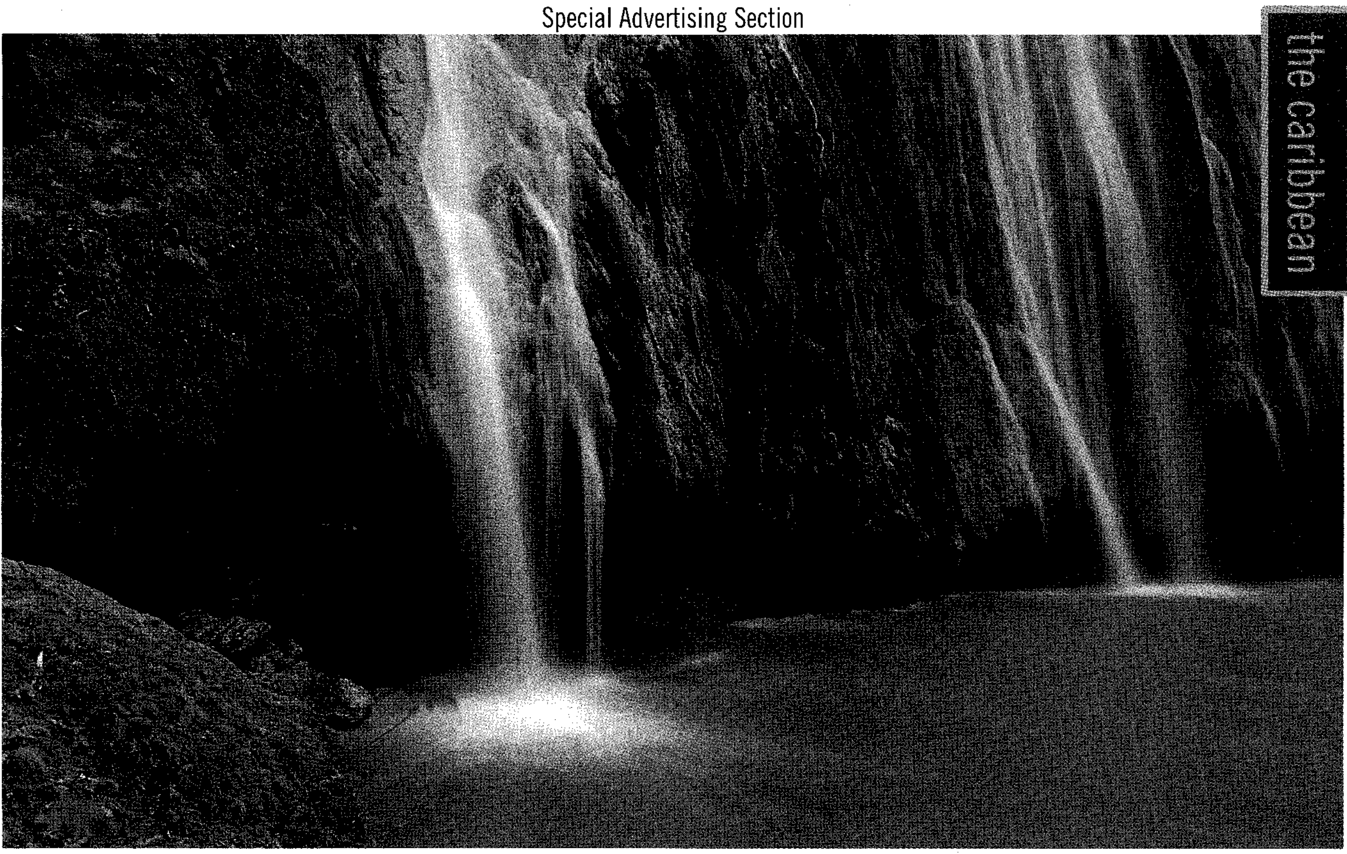

courtesy of the Tourism Office of The Dominican Republic

The delicate balance between unfettered tourism and the preservation of its environment continues to challenge the Caribbean region.

A LIGHT FOOTPRINT

By Dan Ouellette

Just a short flight from U.S. shores, hidden waterfalls course down volcanic rock, mountain aeries overlook canopies of rain-forest ferns, and underwater national parks are illuminated by neon fish. Paradise? Yes. And to keep it that way, the Caribbean nations are mobilizing behind a common goal—to preserve and nurture their precious heritage.

The islands of the Caribbean comprise the world's greatest concentration of small countries—thirty-two in all. The region is among the richest on earth in terms of its biodiversity, and its waters contain more marine species than any other waters of the Western Hemisphere. But according to Conservation International, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit that keeps a watchful eye on the planet's biodiversity, the tropical archipelago now constitutes a major environmental "hot spot."

To offer R. and R. that benefits both the economy and ecosystems—so called sustainable tourism—is the challenge facing the island nations today. But how can the Caribbean cope with its huge influx of visitors while sustaining the natural beauty that attracts them? That tourists share such concerns is reflected in the results of a survey conducted last year by Small Luxury Hotels of the World on behalf of the International Hotels Environment Initiative. Seventy per cent of Americans polled said they were willing to pay extra for environmentally responsible travel, and a majority maintained they were more likely to book hotels that had an environmentally sound "eco-attitude."

EYE ON ECOLOGY

Acknowledging that tourism is the top cash crop of the Caribbean, Michael L. Smith, a Caribbean marine and fish specialist employed by Conservation International, asserts that it's vital to "keep finding innovative ways of bringing financial resources into the countries with as light a footprint as possible."

"It's a matter of survival," reiterates Mabel Sanabria, a spokesperson for the Puerto Rican-based Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism (CAST). "The Caribbean's selling point has always been the environment—the sun, the beaches, the water. From a business point of view, it's essential that we keep the environment pristine." A key player in promoting environmentally responsible tourism, CAST serves as a liaison between environmental groups and two hundred Caribbean hoteliers. It's also active in the Blue Flag campaign, an eco-certification scheme for beaches.

GREEN RESORTS

The growing awareness that eco-ethics is a moral imperative that makes sound business sense has led hoteliers in the region to garner more than their share of Green Globe certificates. A seal-of-approval program, Green Globe 21 was established by the World Travel and Tourism Council in 1994 to acknowledge hotels that display environmental, social,

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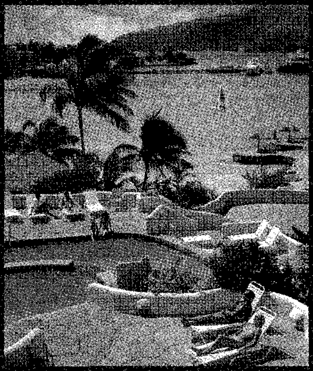

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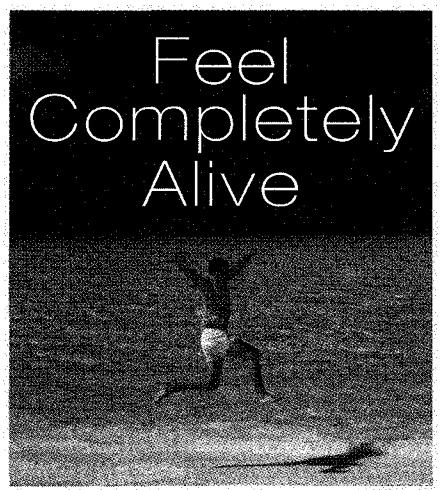

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Smith touts the Dominican Republic's **Punta Cana Resort and Club** as a green resort that is a "classic example of how good environmental practice makes profoundly good business sense." A four-hundred-room luxury property on the country's undeveloped eastern coast, Punta Cana has been innovative in addressing environmental concerns and employs a "green team" to oversee its organic vegetable, fruit, and spice gardens, and its recycled water program. In 1994, it set up an ecological foundation with a two-thousand-acre nature preserve and a hiking trail that wends through mangrove stands and freshwater lagoons. The preserve is home to a Cornell University biodiversity laboratory where local flora and fauna are researched for medicinal cures.

Another model for environmentally savvy hotels is **Half Moon** in Montego Bay, Jamaica. Famed for its half-mile stretch of pristine beachfront, the resort also maintains a twenty-seven-acre nature reserve that harbors tropical birds and wild ducks, an extensive recycling program that includes composting, and a sea-turtle watch and protection awareness program. It has installed solar water heaters and solar lights, and introduced electric golf carts on an eighteen-hole course that is partially irrigated with gray (recycled) water. "What we do has implications beyond our property," says managing director Richard Whitfield. "A thousand people earn their living here, and they carry home ideas about recycling, and energy and water conservation. Half Moon has helped to generate a mindset where both our employees and our visitors have become more aware."

On Antigua, **St. James's Club** extends its environmental stewardship to the turquoise waters of the resort's beachfront peninsula. A dive master oversees its coral reef, insuring that its health is maintained for visitors seeking underwater recreation. St. James's Club has its own deep-sea diving school where guests can take scuba certification classes; they are also taught the basics of protecting the coral and marine life.

POSTMARK
the caribbean

The Cayman Islands' "Wall Street," a deep wall dive in Grand Cayman, has a healthy supply of coral and yellow tube sponges.

CORAL REEF PATROL

The Caribbean's ecosystems are sustained by colorful coral reefs, ranging from blood red to luminous greens. Although coral grows only a half to seven inches a year, coral formations can live for thousands of years. Overfishing, carelessly dropped anchors, and the discharge of pollutants can harshly curtail its health and longevity.

Based on five years of data on reef health gathered by more than five thousand scientists and volunteer divers worldwide, a Reef Check report issued last August by the UCLA Institute of the Environment warns that the world's coral reefs are facing a deepening crisis. Restoration of the reefs is critical because they provide a valuable source of food for marine life and genetic material for pharmaceuticals research (including raw materials for the anti-HIV drug, AZT).

According to the Reef Check report, coral reef conservation benefits from marine parks. Reef Check founder and marine ecologist Gregor Hodgson stresses that while there is a coral reef crisis, solutions are within reach. These include setting up more marine parks to act as seedbeds for surrounding waters, and teaching locals how to care for reefs. "Coral reefs are vital to the health of the earth," he warns.

LAND AND SEA SANCTUARIES

Marine specialist Smith also advocates the establishment of more national preserves—both on land and underwater. He notes, "When islands set aside space for parks, they safeguard species as well as attract visitors."

Ironically, some local fishermen initially opposed marine parks, believing the underwater havens would restrict their fishing areas and thereby jeopardize their livelihoods. But studies have found that the parks provide sanctuaries for fish to breed. "One grouper is easy to pick off with a speargun, but when protected, the grouper will produce more than a million eggs every season," reports Smith. Fishermen understand this now and they realize that a big fish brings more cash to a Caribbean country when left swimming in local waters than when it's sold in the marketplace.

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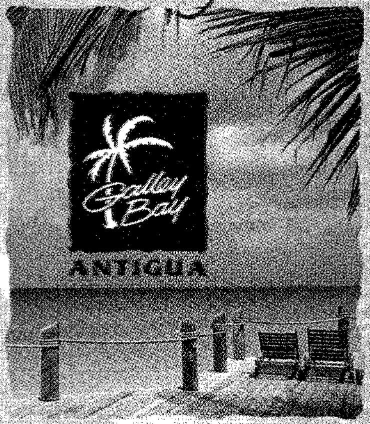

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The waters off the island of **Bonaire** are home to a variety of sponges and rare species like seahorse and frog fish. Smith regards Bonaire National Marine Park as an exemplary model for sound coastal-zone management. The park monitors human impact, conducts scientific research, and organizes clean-up dives. It also maintains dozens of permanent public moorings to protect its forty different known types of coral from haphazard yacht anchorage. The park requires prospective scuba divers to participate in an orientation dive, and it even asks visitors to tote their used batteries back to their own countries because Bonaire has no recycling program or disposal facilities for such potentially toxic substances.

Renowned as the diving capital of the world, the **Cayman Islands** has instituted some of the Caribbean's most effective marine protection laws. In 1978 and 1986, pioneering legislation imposed fines for vessels polluting the islands' territorial waters and established a series of marine parks. The nation is also committed to conservation on land, and Grand Cayman's Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park, a sixty-five acre preserve, was created in 1994 under the aegis of The Cayman Islands National Trust. Replete with floral gardens and trails from which endemic plant life can be appreciated, the park also serves as a protected natural habitat for the endangered blue iguana.

POSTMARK
the caribbean

Last year, Punta Cana collaborated with the Dominican Republic government to sink a 220-foot cargo ship to bolster its offshore reef.

courtesy of the Punta Cana Resort and Club

Gina Ebanks-Petrie, director of the Cayman Islands Department of Environment, is working to establish a system of terrestrial parks that will complement the islands' underwater preserves. With the support of the Minister of Tourism and Environment, Ebanks-Petrie has been focusing her attention on an underdeveloped area of the West Bay Peninsula, which will become Grand Cayman's first national land park in May. "We'd like to build boardwalks over coastal ponds and in the mangrove forests," she says, "to educate people on the importance of wetlands."

The **Dominican Republic**, through the efforts of the Ministry of Protected Areas and National Resources, is intent on preserving its indigenous species in parks such as the Jaragua National Park, which hosts flamingos, egrets, and herons. The park also provides a home for the exotic rhinoceros iguana and four types of turtles that lay their eggs on the beaches.

CONSERVING THE CONCH

A leader in protecting natural resources, **The Islands of The Bahamas** have been at the forefront of the eco-movement. Today, the concentration of conch in the pristine waters of the Exuma Cays Land and Sea Park is thirty-one times greater than outside the park. Designated a "no-take replenishment zone" in 1986, the park's strict ban on harvesting conch has already resulted, by conservative estimates, in the births of several million offspring that will eventually migrate into fishing zones. Over time, such methods increase tourism as well as protect the environment. The Exuma Cays success story led the Bahamas last year to double the size of its national park system—adding ten new parks and protected areas as well as five new fisheries.

"Ten per cent of Bahamas land area is now protected," reports Angela Cleare, director of business development for the Ministry of Tourism. Cleare promotes environmentally friendly hotel construction, such as four-room eco-lodges, and she encourages every hotel to be eco-conscious with its energy, recycling, and water management. "We know tourism is the No. 1 industry in the Bahamas," Cleare says. "People come for the environment—unpolluted water, abundant marine life, endemic bird species. Years ago we damaged our forests and the sea in the name of development. We weren't thinking about the future—about our children and grandchildren. Today we're very careful when it comes to the environment."

Because their coastal zones are their economic lifeblood, the islands of the Caribbean have come to realize that protecting their natural resources is a regional priority. While unfettered tourism poses risks to an island's well-being, a commitment to healthy ecosystems will encourage and sustain the swell of paradise seekers. The challenge for the Caribbean—how to juggle the needs of the economy and the environment—is now being faced with circumspection and creativity.

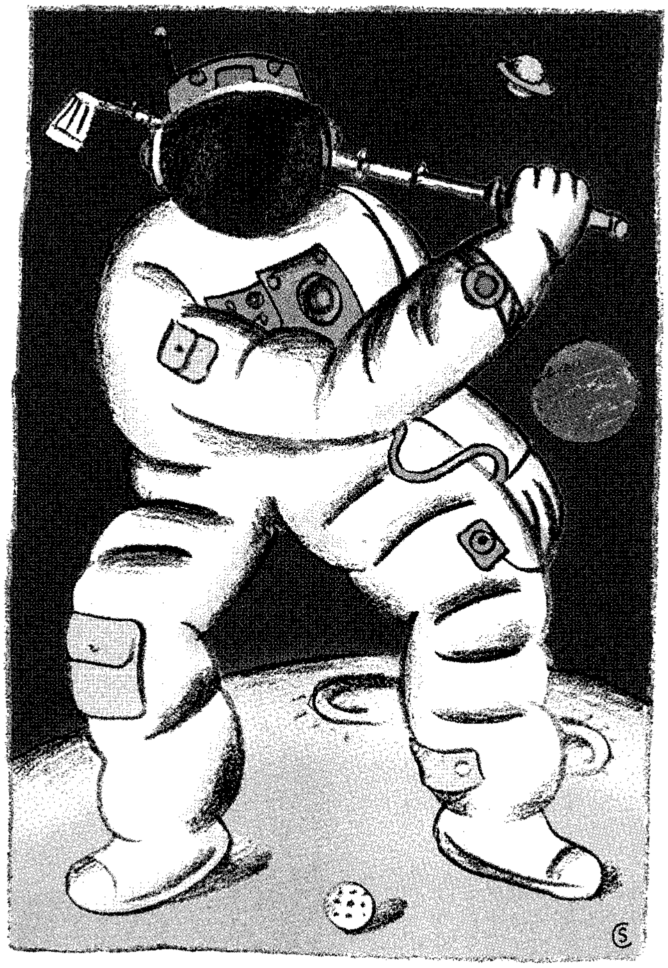
OUR LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

THE TEE ROOM

A Manhattan landmark is set to become a shrine to golf.

BY JOHN McPHEE

In the first week of 2003, I had lunch at the Russian Tea Room, which had gone bankrupt and closed its doors forever in the middle of 2002. Among the still hovering samovars, I ate take-in pizza with tomatoes and fresh garlic. Rand Jerris, in the role of host, ate pizza with pepperoni. In low light over the red carpet, and in the rouge reflection from high walls of mirrors, we sat at a red banquette, in the ground-floor dining room, at 150 West Fifty-seventh Street, discussing golf.



"I'm going to try a little sand-trap shot here," Alan Shepard said.

SEYMOUR CHWAST

The air was economically underheated, but not so much so that you could see your breath. Stained glass had been removed from a ceiling or two. Otherwise, nothing about the restaurant had yet been altered, and its festooned, Las Vegas décor remained as Russian as the Russian River. Everywhere in its six stories the place was eerie, dustless, immaculate, embalmed—spiffily glowing even in the dark. Its football-size "Fabergé-inspired" eggs—blown on an island in the Lagoon of Venice by the incomparable Tagliapietra—still dangled from the branches of a golden tree. Dozens of golden bears still danced in the chandeliers; and the huge acrylic see-through bear that once had young sturgeons swimming in its stomach still stood fifteen feet high on its hind legs looking for its next fish. Jerris said that the acrylic bear was far too large for the elevator or the stairs, and would have to depart through dismantled façade, or, he added half seriously, be painted gold and stay put as a testimonial to Jack Nicklaus.

Jerris is the director of the Museum and Archives of the United States Golf Association, which has bought the Russian Tea Room, for sixteen million dollars, in bankruptcy court. The sale includes the eggs, the bears, the knives, the forks, the plates, the punch bowls, and the two-foot cutlasses that gave structural integrity to the Ivan Skavinsky kebab. The sale includes the Chagalls, the Picassos, the Kandinskys, the Kustodiev, the Surikov, the Golovin reproductions on the walls. The sale includes the marching army in the dioramic model of the Kremlin, over which the sun sets, the moon sets, and stars emerge. The United States Golf Association has a different kind of army, a different kind of gallery in mind. The U.S.G.A. is thinking of films and photographs and do-it-yourself designing of golf holes and clubs. It is thinking of computerized axial tomography that can CAT-scan anybody's swing. It is reviewing its collection of forty thousand items of golf memorabilia stored or on display at U.S.G.A. headquarters, in Far Hills, New Jersey, because it has decided to move its museum to New York.

The Tea Room, close to Carnegie Hall, is twenty-five feet wide, and its six stories are floor-through—a seventy-yard pitch-and-run from Fifty-seventh Street to Fifty-sixth. The place has no interior bearing walls, and after its stack of six fully equipped kitchens have been carted away all floors will be open space from end to end. Jerris remarked that the general presentation there would not be chronological, as it is in the museum's Georgian mansion on eighty-six acres in Far Hills, where the first published reference to golf (Scottish Acts of Parliament, 1566) is among the introductory artifacts, while somewhere near the end is the pitching wedge used by Tiger Woods in winning by fifteen strokes the U.S. Open at Pebble Beach—the record low score in the national championship. Floor by floor, as you rise or descend in New York, you will move through thematic aspects of the game, ranging from the science underlying it to the passion it evokes. "Golf is essentially passion," Jerris said, "which is something people not involved with the game cannot always understand." As envisioned by the U.S.G.A., a core concentration of audio-visual and interactive exhibits will attempt to delete the city sidewalks from arriving customers' minds, transposing them to jadeite fairways, and showing them or reminding them of (as Jerris spontaneously expressed it) "the aesthetic beauty, the power and strength of the game—the three-hundred-yard drive, the shot that rises into the sky and floats against the landscape, the forty-foot putt that sinks.”

Beyond question, the swing analyzer is high core. “Twenty cameras in an arc of a hundred and eighty degrees are filming simultaneously, contributing to a composite, slow-motion, three-dimensional image,” Jerris said. “Business people run in, run up to get their swing analyzed.” They take home a DVD and study it superposed on Tiger’s swing. The thirteen U.S.G.A. championship trophies stand nearby, the oldest being the Women’s Amateur (1896), fully four feet tall and bossed with jewels. Original men’s trophies have had a way of melting in fires. Champions can buy replicas of trophies they win, but the real things are on their way to the Russian Tea Room, like the 1-iron that Ben Hogan used in his miraculous return from a crushing highway injury to win the 1950 Open at Merion, and Bobby Jones’s hickory-shafted gooseneck putter Calamity Jane, two of the three most hallowed golf clubs in the U.S.G.A.’s collection of six thousand.

On the seventy-second hole at Merion, Hogan—exhausted and still unsteady on his recuperating legs—hit such a storybook shot with the 1-iron that a number of touring professionals later gathered at the spot to see who could do the same. No one could do the same. None of them even hit the green. As Hogan and his caddy had moved on up the fairway after the shot, the unroped gallery closed in around them, and the 1-iron disappeared from Hogan’s bag. Thirty-three years later, it turned up in an East Coast pro shop, and was tentatively identified after a dealer noticed that balls had been hit so consistently on the 1-iron’s exact sweet spot—more than halfway back on the face of the club—that a half-inch dot had been etched in the metal. The club was mailed to Hogan in Texas, who confirmed its authenticity, and gave it to the U.S.G.A.

Bobby Jones won his Grand Slam with Calamity Jane, and so many additional tournaments that his bright medals—arranged in Far Hills in annual rows, as they will be on Fifty-seventh Street—resemble a winning card at Bingo.

When Apollo 14 went to the moon, in 1971, it carried a rock-and-soil-sampling tool that had a barrel grip and a cylindrical shaft three-quarters of an inch in diameter. Aluminum with Teflon O-rings, it was thirty-three inches long and consisted of six parts that could fit into one another to make the one shaft. Unbeknownst to NASA, the U.S. Navy astronaut Alan Shepard and a guy in the NASA machine shop took the head off a 6-iron and modified its hosel with a hexagonal fitting that would lock into one end of the sampler’s handle. Shepard put the club head in a white athletic sock with two golf balls, concealed the package down one leg of his space suit, blasted off the big tee in Florida, and headed for the first at Lunarrama. After completing his duties up there, he assembled the golf club and pulled one of the balls out of the sock. Speaking on live television to the population of the planet he had left behind, and sounding just slightly like a barker in a sideshow, he said, “In my left hand I have a little white pellet familiar to millions of Americans.” He said, “I’m going to try a little sand-trap shot here,” and, like most golfers who routinely shoot bogey rounds, he offered an excuse beforehand: the space suit was inconveniently bulky—“I can’t do it with two hands.” He swung with one hand, four times. He whiffed. He nudged a ball a few feet. He shanked into a crater. And on his fourth swing he clocked one three hundred yards. The length of the shot was less impressive to Shepard than the length of time it remained aloft—about thirty-five seconds (versus six for a long drive on Earth). He left the two golf balls on the moon but brought the club back with him, and three years later gave it to the U.S.G.A. The Shepard moon club at the Smithsonian Institution’s Air & Space Museum in Washington is a replica.

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Jerris refers to that O-ringed 6-iron as “the most important golf club in history.” Whatever you and your friend Jack Nicklaus might make of that, surely you will find it in the Tea Room in a central location. Level to level, you are always drawn first to the center of things, and then, “if the subject matter interests you, you move toward areas of the floor which are detail-rich and artifact-heavy.” And there, for example, you will find the feathery. The history of golf is as much as anything the history of the ball.

"Feathery," sometimes "featherie," is both a noun and an adjective, and refers to the ancestral golf ball, a leather pouch stuffed with feathers that was in play from the Middle Ages to the middle of the nineteenth century. In a display case in Far Hills is an inverted lum hat—a top hat off the head of, say, Eustace Tilley—full of feathers. Beside it are four feather-stuffed balls, the whitest, most pristine of which the U.S.G.A. bought not long ago, through an auction house in England, for twenty-five thousand dollars. It was made by Tom Morris, the legendary champion, craftsman, and keeper of the green at the Royal and Ancient Golf Club, St. Andrews. Like everybody else who made featheries, he cut out two pieces of leather in figure-8 shape and sewed them together as a pouch, leaving a small opening through which he stuffed a hatful of boiled wet feathers and then completed the stitching. To stuff so many feathers into a little thing the size of a golf ball, you used a succession of awls, ever larger in size, culminating in an iron spike two feet long whose curvilinear handle fit your chest. You heaved, grunted, shoved, gasped; and the last hackle went in. Gradually, as the compacted feathers lost their moisture, they sought to expand to their natural volume, and the ball hardened until it felt like rock. "A good player can hit a feathery about a hundred and seventy-five yards," Jerris told me in Far Hills one day, standing in front of the lum hat, forty thousand dollars' worth of featheries, and the series of murderous awls. "The record drive with a feather ball is over three hundred and thirty yards," he continued. "In 1836, Samuel Messieux, a member of the R. & A. at St. Andrews, drove from the eighteenth tee over the eighteenth green. The shot was probably wind-assisted."

The price of a feather ball was about a third the price of a single golf club. "In the feather-ball era, it was the price of the ball that made the game so prohibitively expensive for most people," Jerris said. As early as the eighteenth century, golfers discovered empirically that the featheries flew farther when their covers were scuffed, creating drag and lift. "They intentionally scuffed up new balls. It's the same principle that is behind the dimple on the modern golf ball."

Vehicles crossed the links to get to beaches in Scotland, leaving tracks and ruts that amplified the difficulty of getting to the flagstick in fewer than ten strokes. You needed your rut iron, your track iron, to get out of such lies, but most other clubs were wooden, because iron could knock the feathers out of the balls. As a consequence, the feather-ball period was the era of the long-nose wood. If your caddy carried seven clubs (bunched on one shoulder, since golf bags did not come along until the eighteen-nineties), six of the clubs were long-nose woods: the play club (driver) and the grassed driver, followed in increasing loft by the long spoon, the middle spoon, and the short spoon, a progression that culminated in the even greater loft of the wooden niblick. Try that in the swing analyzer.

In the eighteen-forties and thereabout, protective packing materials, coach whips, and whatnot, were made from the dried sap of a tree called the gutta-percha, which grows on the Malay Peninsula. Boiled and softened, the dried sap could be shaped in a mold, and in 1848 it flew as a golf ball. Its claimant inventors outnumber the inventors of the wheel. The gutta-percha golf ball, as it was called, replaced the feathery and transmogrified the game. It was about three times cheaper, it was durable, it was easy to make, and it flew farther. "A good player could hit a gutta-percha ball two hundred, maybe two hundred and twenty-five yards," Jerris remarked. Scotland being Scotland, this sunny news provoked an outcry of dismay. "The gutta-percha ball would ruin the game! It would fly too far, the game would be too easy! Golf courses would become obsolete! The exact same thing we're dealing with today. The evolution of golf-ball technology was going to ruin the fundamental character of the game. It hasn't quite done so yet."

Jerris went on to say that gutta-percha balls were recyclable—they could be cured of smiles in small presses at home. "We have two of these on dis-

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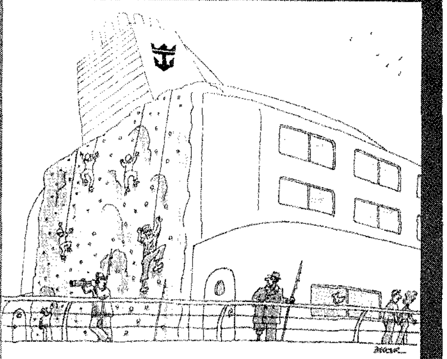

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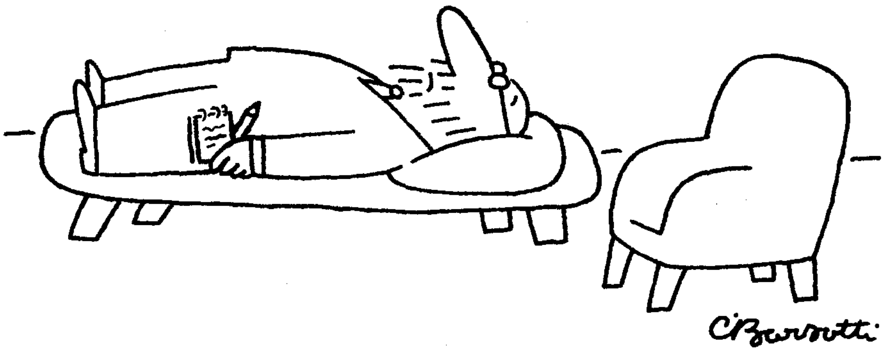

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play here. You took your ball home, dropped it in boiling water, softened it up, re-pressed it, and repainted it. It was a solid, one-piece ball. That big press in the back of the case belonged to a St. Andrews family that made balls commercially. The earliest gutta-percha balls were smooth. Then they started to cut patterns in them, using chisels and hammers. Eventually, they started to mold patterns in the actual press. Rather than concave depressions in the surface of the ball, there were convex protrusions. They called it the bramble ball, and it was the most popular pattern until the first dimple was patented, in 1908."

The gutta-percha ball was not without defects. "It wasn't very lively, it did not bounce and roll well," Jerris said. "It didn't fly particularly high. It was what we would call today a dead golf ball." In 1898, Coburn Haskell and Bertram Work, of the B. F. Goodrich Company, in Akron, Ohio, tried winding a rubber core with rubber thread until they had a tight little globe that they covered with a tough rubber hide. This was to be the golf ball of the twentieth century. "The new balls were far more lively, but players derisively called them Bounding Billies. A lot of professionals refused to use them. They said they were going to ruin the game, golf courses were going to become outdated, and so forth. For the beginner, the Bounding Billy made the game a lot more fun. It flew farther. It responded better to the club face. It made the game easier."

The latest innovation—the golf ball of the present, the golf ball of the twenty-first century—lay in a display case sliced in half. It is not a mass of rubber band but an object that in cross-section closely resembles the planet on which the game has been invented and played. Its small core is surrounded by its principal part, an apparently solid but dense and elastic mantle; and the mantle is covered by a thin, stiff, rugged but resilient plate.

The International Spy Museum, at 800 F Street NW, in Washington, opened in July, 2002, and drew more than three hundred thousand people in its first six months. The U.S.G.A. was watching with binoculars. To the museum in Far Hills, it was annually attracting twenty-five thousand max, albeit the visitors were from every state and more than three dozen countries. Pondering how to stretch the clientele past the dedicated golfer, Jerris consulted Jim Gates, the librarian of Cooperstown, and asked him, "Who's your target audience?"

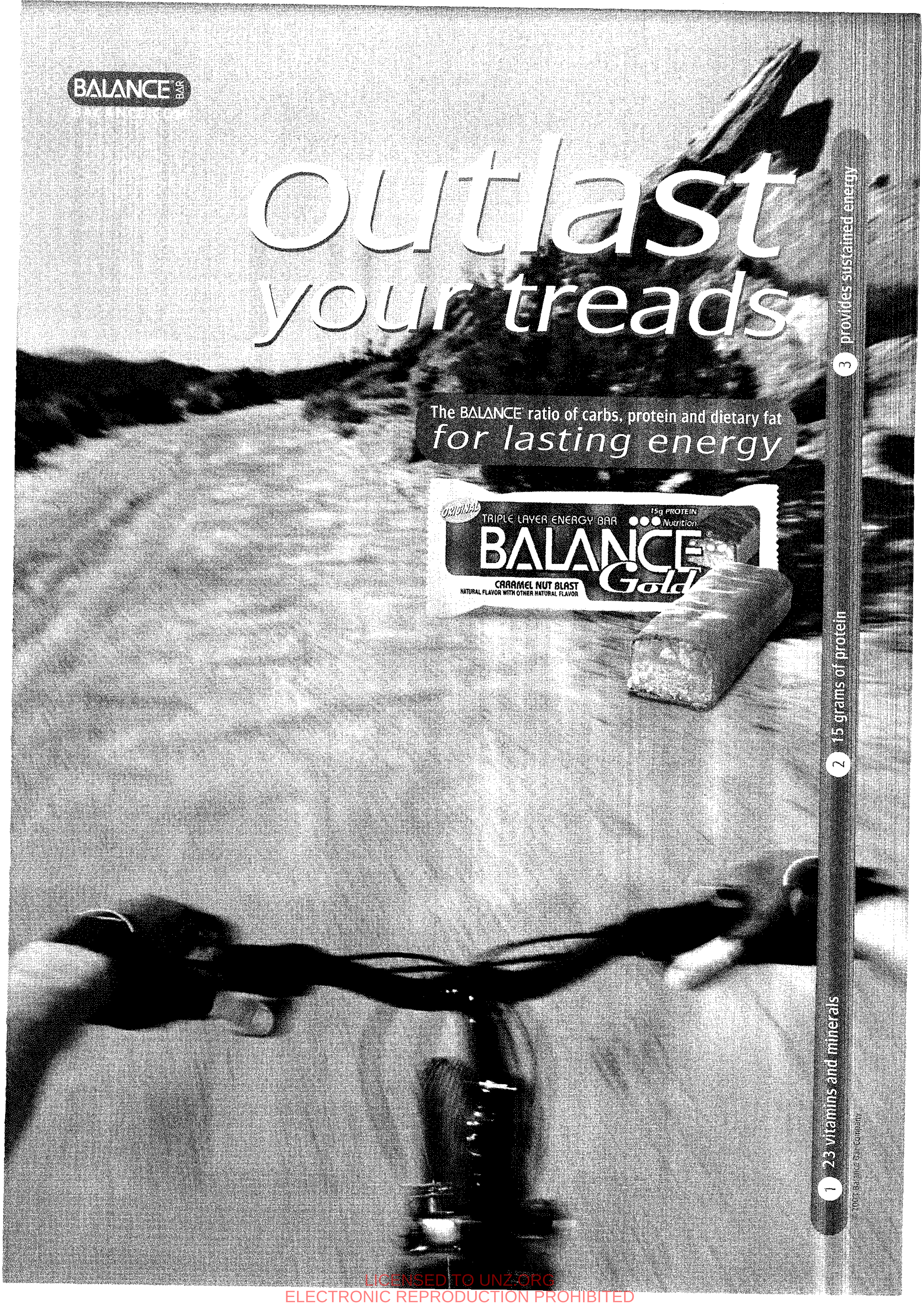
Gates said, right back, "It's the people who love the people who love baseball."

Cooperstown gets three hundred and twenty thousand visitors a year. The Hockey Hall of Fame, in Toronto, gets three hundred and fifty thousand. The Basketball Hall of Fame, in Springfield, Massachusetts, gets a hundred and twenty thousand. The Pro Football Hall of Fame, in Canton, Ohio, has skidded over the past five years to a hundred and eighty thousand. Let's run some of those numbers through New York City. The N.B.A. store on Fifth Avenue at Fifty-second Street, about six blocks from the Russian Tea Room, had well over a million visitors last year. Granted, it's not a museum, but it sets the New York tone. The Jewish Museum, most uncentral at Fifth Avenue and Ninety-second Street, draws two hundred thousand people a year. The Museum of Arts and Design, on West Fifty-third Street, draws two hundred and seventy-five thousand a year. Jerris believes that three hundred thousand is a reasonable expectation for the museum on Fifty-seventh Street, which will be the only major sports museum in the city. Four years older than Cooperstown, it is the oldest museum dedicated to sport in this country. For the Tea Room, the U.S.G.A.'s initial business model was based on a hundred thousand visitors a year, but it won't be surprising if they draw half a million.

Which is why—after casting about in indecision—they decided to move into the city. Golf House, as their New Jersey mansion is called, was designed by John Russell Pope and has some of the elegance of his other work (the Jefferson Memorial, the National Archives, the National Gallery of Art), but it is without humidity and temperature control. Old balls of every era explode in their display cases. "The collection is deteriorating," Jerris admitted. "When old Billies split, rubber threads—the guts of the ball—spill out. Leather grips are rotting. Pick them up, your hands are red. Things disintegrating in front of your eyes—it's tough to take." Mold broke out on the third floor and the museum was unable to use the floor for a year and a half. Moreover, the mansion did not comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and while the U.S.G.A. was vigorously encouraging all people, including people in wheelchairs, to take up golf, people—this is a particularly difficult sentence to write—people with handicaps could not get into Golf House.

The U.S.G.A. had seriously studied Newport, Atlanta, and Monterey. In 2001, when the Museum of the City of New York was planning to move downtown from its location at Fifth Avenue and 103rd Street, the U.S.G.A. considered leasing the building for a nominal fee and paying for renovations, but the cost of the renovations turned out to be more than thirty million. Not even Tiger could have hit that green.

Then along came Eric Gleacher. He was from Wall Street, a Merlin of mergers and acquisitions. He was also the new chair, in February, 2002, of the U.S.G.A.'s Museum Committee. As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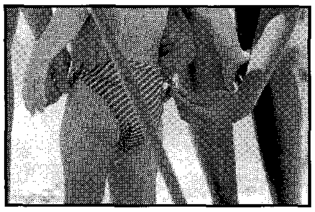

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Charles Flowers

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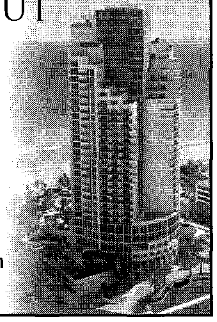

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others, in a growing sentiment to stay in New Jersey, discussed expansion and renovation, Gleacher said, "Give me a year to figure out an alternative," and he disappeared into the streets of New York. Whenever he found something interesting, David Fay, the U.S.G.A.'s executive director, and Rand Jerris would go into the city to have a look. "I was just the catalyst," Gleacher told me on the phone not long ago (I reached him at a golf course in Florida). He said he found a brownstone on Sixty-ninth Street that was the New York enclave of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. It contained a warren of offices, and the elevator would have been overwhelmed even by a modest crowd. On East Fifty-fourth Street, just off Fifth Avenue, he found "a fantastic Stanford White house, right behind the Gucci store; it was owned by an Italian bank." It was also *costosissimo*. The Banco di Napoli wanted twenty-four million euros. The U.S.G.A. seemed to be back on square one. However, the real-estate agent for the Stanford White house also happened to become the agent for the estate of Warner LeRoy, the grandson of one of Hollywood's most famous brothers. LeRoy had brought stage-set show business to three independently incorporated New York restaurants: Maxwell's Plum, the Tavern on the Green, and the Russian Tea Room. Gleacher said, "It was an amazing piece of luck. It's going to be difficult to execute this, but we have a rich subject to work with." The acquisition seemed to be significant news in Tokyo, Sydney, Moscow, and Johannesburg, but not especially in New York.

The U.S.G.A. was founded in New York City in 1894 and stayed in town until 1972. It was once on East Fifty-seventh Street, just two blocks from Carnegie Hall, and for many decades was at 40 East Thirty-eighth Street, where its small, nascent museum drew a thousand people a year. The move to Far Hills was precipitated, in part, by a need for a test range, a greensward that was eventually laced with buried seismometers, where a robot called Iron Byron—a machine that held and swung an actual driver—drove uncertified golf balls as much as three hundred yards. Some of them split in two. Some turned into shrapnel. A seismograph recorded if and where the balls landed. Replaced by a younger robot, Iron Byron, Sr., is on his way to the Tea Room. He can drive a golf ball several city blocks, but he may not be given the chance.

Next door to the Tea Room, at 146 West Fifty-seventh Street, you can rent a two-bedroom apartment for a hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year. Called Metropolitan Tower, this extremely narrow building rises seven hundred feet. Twenty-five feet from it is Carnegie Hall Tower, whose height and width are essentially the same. The ministructure whose slice of air separates its soaring neighbors is, of course, the coming home of the Hogan 1-iron, Calamity Jane, and Iron Byron. CitySpire, a thin and even taller building, is just across Fifty-sixth Street from the back end of the Tea Room. The three clustered skyscrapers have been variously described as slivers, fins, or blades, but around that musical milieu they are universally known as the Tuning Fork Trio. Converging on the little Tea Room far down between them, they also look like three chopsticks incongruously holding a cocktail blini. Numbered "19," a large flagstick may rise from the museum roof. The austere, cream, opaque façade—capable of suggesting not only tsarist Russia but also a historical élitism the U.S.G.A. would like to purge from golf—is coming off the building in favor of clear glass, in which, by day, visitors can be seen milling about the gutta-perchas or riding up and down in a transparent elevator, while at night, in a rising scroll of pictures sent forth by interior projection, the best golfers in the world, twice life size, entertain Fifty-seventh Street with moon-length drives, deadly approaches, bunker blasts, and impossible putts.

The United States Golf Association is, as Jerris describes it, "a governing body, a regulator and administrator of the game," and for politic reasons its museum has never been and will not become a hall of fame. No elections. No plaques. No asterisks. Having said that, he lingers helplessly in Far Hills before presentations of his particular heroes, and says he hopes to give even more emphasis on Fifty-seventh Street to biographical anecdotes than to souvenirs. In the late eighties and early nineties, he had a summer job at the

U.S.G.A. while he was a student at Williams. One day, without advance notice, Mr. and Mrs. Byron Nelson walked in and asked him to show them around. Half a century earlier, Mr. Nelson had won the Masters (twice), the P.G.A. (twice), and the U.S. Open. He and Mrs. Nelson spent three and a half hours with Jerris, slowly absorbing the museum. Jerris was to have similar experiences with Sam Snead and Arnold Palmer. Something approaching half the time he spent with the Nelsons, they stood before a montage of photographs of twenty-two former champions while Byron Nelson told the college junior stories about each one.

Up a short flight of stairs from that montage is a display where Jerris seems capable of spending an entire day. Outsized behind the artifacts—behind the usual clubs, behind the light-blue golfing dress—is a faded photographic image of Babe Didrikson Zaharias, her appraising, guileless regard aimed at the viewer. Jerris rises incrementally to his topic. She designed, cut, and sewed the dress, he says. She recorded and published her own harmonica music. "She won two gold medals in the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles, setting world records in both events—long jump and hurdles. Earlier that year, she went to the Amateur Athletic Union's national track and field championship, in Evanston, Illinois, which was a team competition, with thirty and forty athletes on a team, representing major cities. She went alone—as a team of one—representing her home town in Texas, and singlehandedly won the meet. She played professional baseball and professional basketball. She came to golf fairly late in life. She took it up in the nineteen-thirties and in a very short period of time was winning at the national level. Many have called her the best golfer, male or female, who ever played the game, and I think I might agree. Since I've worked at the U.S.G.A., there are a few people in the game who have emerged for me as real heroes, and I would put Zaharias sort of right at the front of any of those lists." She won three United States Open championships and died of cancer at the age of forty-five.

Not far from that blue dress are the traditional red coats worn by members of the early Scottish golfing societies, and by the women who played, too, but were not members. In some of the oil paintings of golfing scenes from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the players look as if they are retreating from the Battle of Princeton. The golfing coats were derived from the military uniform, and served the same purpose: your friends, shooting, tried not to hit you. The red coats were also worn on golf courses in America, as recently as the eighteen-nineties.

Beside a photograph of a dozen or so women in broad-brimmed hats and long Victorian dresses, sitting on the porch of a Tudor-style clubhouse (some with golf clubs in their hands), a placard says, "Morris County Golf Club, in Morristown, New Jersey, was founded in 1894, and has the distinction of being the first club in the United States organized solely by women. The course measured over six thousand yards and had holes with such colorful names as 'Hoodoo,' 'Blasted Hopes,' and 'Sunset.' Two hundred men were permitted to join the club as associate members, and eventually they wedged their way into power." The U.S.G.A. Women's Amateur Championship was held at Morris County Golf Club in 1896. The U.S.G.A. Men's Amateur Championship was held there in 1898.

As in New Jersey, an exhibit in New York will present the golfers John Shippen and Oscar Bunn, and their protested participation in the 1896 U.S. Open at Shinnecock Hills, the links course on Long Island. Shippen was a Shinnecock. He was actually half Native American and half African-American. Bunn was all Shinnecock. Many of the other competitors signed a petition demanding that Shippen and Bunn be barred from the championship. They said they would not play if Shippen and Bunn were allowed to play. The U.S.G.A.'s instant response came from its president, the sugar king Theodore Havemeyer, who said that the United States Open Championship would take place as scheduled even if Shippen and Bunn were the only players in the field. The rebellious golfers, digesting crow,

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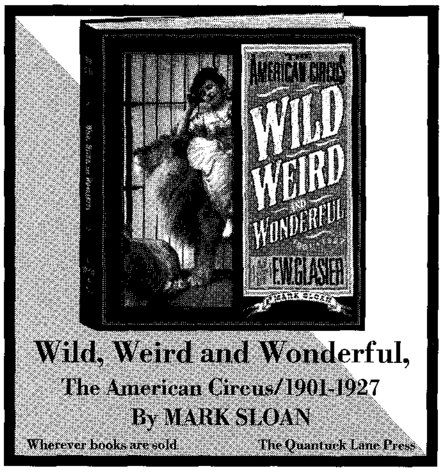

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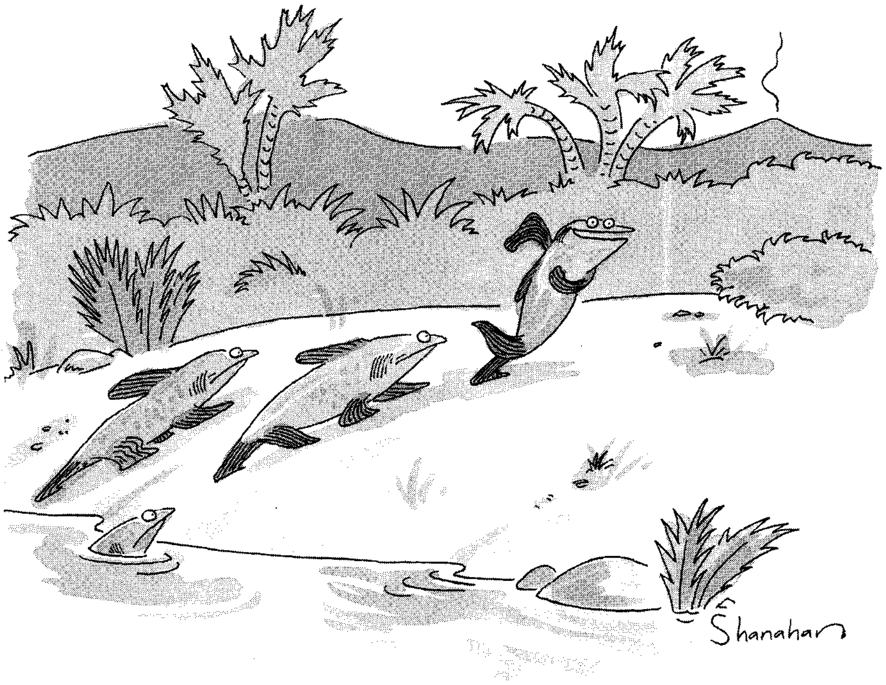
decided to tee off after all. In the final round, Shippen was in the lead. Like many a golfer who would follow his example in decades to come, he blew up on one disastrous hole. He finished fifth. "The U.S.G.A. likes to point to this moment to say that for as long as the organization has been around there's been a history of acceptance of anyone who was competent and passionate about playing the game," Jerris said. "We hope to be able to stress and bring to life stories like this in New York." The P.G.A., on the other hand, in 1943 wrote a Caucasians-only clause into its constitution and bylaws. It lasted eighteen years.

At Williams, Jerris was not a member of the golf team, although he shot regularly in the low to middle seventies and had a 4 handicap. He was good enough to be on the team, but his geology labs preëmpted his afternoons. He was double-majoring in geology and art history. When academic rigors oppressed him, he escaped to the college's Taconic Golf Club. He escaped at least four times a week, typically teeing off at seven in the morning. If rain was pouring down, he was not unhappy, because he was alone with the course and the game and the half-billion-year-old rock of the surrounding Berkshires. High over the narrowing fairways, some of his tee shots seemed to be seeking targets in the mountains. "A lot of people like the social aspect of golf—I sometimes like the solitary aspect," he told me. "It was my meditative and reflection time. It's just you and the golf course and nature and it's a time to think or not think—to get away."

He went to Duke to pursue a Ph.D. in geology, but the program there disappointed him, and the quandary that followed resulted in a change of discipline eccentric even in the academic world. He left the Duke geology program and earned a Ph.D. in art history at Princeton, completing a doctoral dissertation on early-medieval churches in Alpine Switzerland. He prepared for Princeton with an M.A. from Williams and more par rounds at Taconic. Meanwhile, out of sheer affection and from seventh grade onward, he had read enough books about the evolution of golf to qualify for a doctorate in the history of the game. While writing his Princeton thesis, he worked three years part time as a research assistant for the World Golf Hall of Fame. He was lining up in the job market for art-and-architectural historians, planning to be a professor, when the World Golf Hall of Fame and the U.S.G.A. each offered him full-time employment. The art-and-architectural history went down in one putt. In June, 1999, he joined the museum in Far Hills, and within three years was preparing to move it to New York.



"Walk, hell—I gotta dance!"

"Some people think the U.S.G.A. is a lot of gray-haired guys in blue jackets with dandruff on their shoulders, but it's not like that at all," he once told me. "It's a great bunch of people, a lot of them quite young." More than two hundred work at U.S.G.A. headquarters, regulating the game of golf and to some extent each other. Early in his employment there, Jerris uttered the words "sand trap" in a casual conversation with a member of the staff. She said, "Young man, we call those bunkers here." The term "sand trap" does not appear in the rules of golf. In various offices around the U.S.G.A. you will find kitties into which a miscreant who says "sand trap" is supposed to pay a dollar. A bunker traditionally was any kind of obstacle. On the golf course at Newport, where the first men's U.S. Amateur and Open were held in 1895, a New England stone wall ran right across a fairway. If you refer to the stone wall as a bunker, you owe nothing to the kitty. At one time, piled-up mounds of dirt were also known as bunkers. For lake, pond, or stream, the fine-free word is "hazard." The word "tournament" is taboo. "We conduct national championships—we do not use the T word," Jerris said, his vocabulary thoroughly cleansed. "I'm not sure I can explain the difference." "Pin" is taboo, too. You are not aiming at the pin, you are aiming at der flagstick. You are in deep debt to the kitty if you speak of "pin placement." The correct term is "hole location." If you want to get into real trouble, Jerris suggests, "try saying something like 'When I was playing in the tournament last week, I hit a shot to the pin that was located three feet beyond the sand trap.' " The museum's new space has yet to achieve a nomenclatural status subject to fines. Meanwhile, around the U.S.G.A., everyone calls it the Tea Room.

Film loops will be all over the Tea Room in counterpoint to the static artifacts. In a storage facility that would impress the Library of Congress, Jerris has a great many kilometres of motion-picture footage, from which he can draw some of the rarest action in the history of golf. He also has eighteen instructional films made in Hollywood by Bobby Jones, who seriously and patiently teaches the game to W. C. Fields, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Edward G. Robinson, Walter Huston, Joan Blondell, Loretta Young, Joe E. Brown, James Cagney—and you. Warner Bros., 1931.

"One of my missions over the next few months is to try to find Arnold Palmer's tractor," Jerris said. "Remember Arnold sitting on his dad's tractor at Latrobe Country Club advertising Pennzoil? Arnold Palmer was the first golfer who was so well known that he could effectively market motor oil."

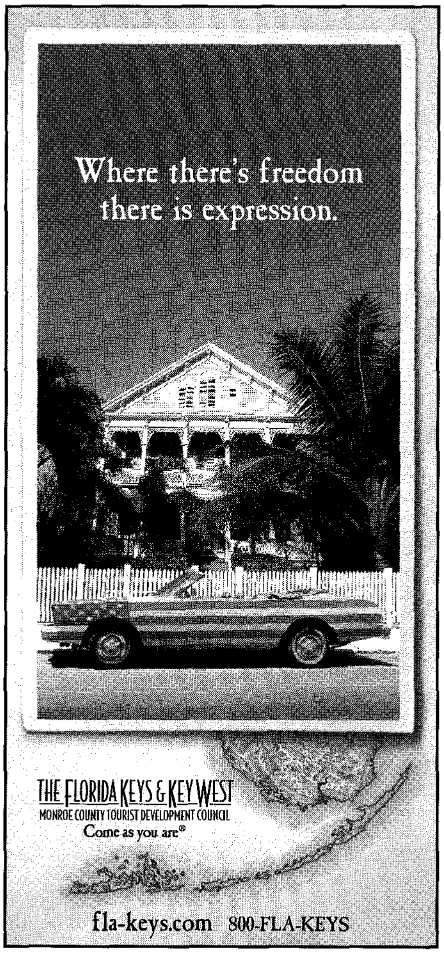
Jerris will take to Fifty-seventh Street the ballot box once used by the Royal and Ancient Golf Club to admit or reject new members. It looks something like an oak doll house, with an A on one side, an R on the other side, two drawers at the bottom, and a tube about the size of a golf hole protruding from the front. A member reached in with a golf ball and dropped it on the A side or the R side. The contents of the drawers held the verdict, and contributed incidentally to the language. The A count notwithstanding, if any member dropped a black ball into the box the applicant failed.

He'll take the Jennings slot machine, which was popular in pro shops during the Great Depression. Like any one-armed bandit, the Jennings had the cherries, lemons, and plums, but it paid off in golf balls. The jackpot was one golf ball. That was one too many for the Internal Revenue Service, which seized the bandits as gambling machines, and few survive. Have you any idea what your Jennings is worth? When they come on the market today, they sell for ten thousand to twenty thousand dollars.

He'll take a portrait of Havemeyer to the Tea Room, to hang where Kandinsky does now, and he'll take a portrait of the banker George Herbert Walker, donor of the Walker Cup, fourteenth president of the U.S.G.A., and a portrait of the Connecticut Senator Prescott Bush, twenty-third president of the U.S.G.A., and he will take no portrait of their golfspring George Walker Bush, who is missing the G.A.

He'll take Enid Wilson's driver, Tommy Armour's mongrel mashie, Virginia Van Wie's 9-iron, Lawson Little's 5-iron, Henry Cotton's putter, and Glenna Collett Vare's spoon. He'll take the Edinburgh Cleek. He'll take Johnny Miller's pitching wedge "from the 1973 Open at Oakmont, when he shot that historic 63 in the final round." And he'll take the first modern sand wedge, designed, made, and tested (in the 1932 British Open) by Gene Sarazen, who was desperately trying to overcome perhaps the only significant flaw in his game: he could not get out of a sand trap. Make that bunker. As Jerris tells the story, "Sarazen had gone flying with his friend Howard Hughes. Sarazen watched the way the airplane functioned, the shape of the wing creating lift. He thought that if he could shape a golf club like an airfoil it would slip through the sand and actually rise, carrying the ball out of the sand. At his home golf club in Westchester County, New York, he set up a workbench, took a standard niblick, and spent an entire weekend adding solder to the back of the club head, then using files to shape and file down, shape and file down the form of the club until it resembled an airplane's wing. He went out to a bunker and practiced shot after shot until he got the shape right. At Royal St. Georges, in England, he put the club head-down into his bag, worried that if R. & A. officials saw the wedge they would deem it illegal. He had a terrific week, particularly out of the bunkers, and won the British Open. They could have disqualified him. They didn't."

To the Tea Room Jerris will take the U.S.G.A. Research and Test Center's display of nonconforming clubs, rule-violating clubs: clubs with wheels (including putters that roll as if they're spreading paint), clubs with protrusions, appendages, unusually bent shafts, forked grips. Jerris's favorite is the Jack Daniel's putter, with a small bottle of Jack Daniel's afloat within an acrylic head. It violates a rule that states that the club shall be of one piece with no moving parts. So does a metal tube in the shape of an inverted U, from which a club head is suspended like a pendulum. It swings to and fro between the legs of the U. Also in violation is the putter Enterprise—a standard putter with two appendages that branch off seven or eight inches and are topped with triangular weights, the result being a putter said to resemble the Starship Enterprise. "The idea is to put the weights out to expand the sweet spot of the club, to resist



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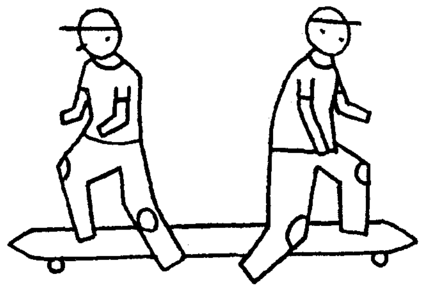
torquing or twisting for off-center hits," Jerris explained. "It's a terrible design. I've putted with that putter. It twists."

He'll take playing cards with which you can play golf, dice with which you can play golf, and spinning tops that address the same purpose. He'll take the first golf board game (1894) and tin games from the twenties with mechanical golfers. "The toy games seek to take this sport that's played on such a large dimension and shrink it down to a tabletop, and to capture on that tabletop the spirit of the game, the rules of the game, the character of the game," Jerris said. Hopefully, he envisioned visitors in the Tea Room, even total strangers, "sitting down and spending fifteen minutes playing a game together and learning something about golf."

Also, he'll take the old wooden tees. A colorful, geometrically entrancing display, they are old in a shallow sense, for they did not appear everywhere on golf courses until after 1924. They did not exist in 1457, when James II banned golf as a threat to the security of Scotland (his archers were out of practice because they were playing too much golf). Tees did not exist, needless to say, on Holland's frozen canals, whence the game of *kolf*, much like hockey, migrated to solid earth on the coastal links of Scotland, becoming the Gaelic *goff*, played on grass mowed by the teeth of sheep. For five or six hundred years, golfers teed up their balls on handfuls of loose sand. After completing a hole, they reached into the hole itself and picked up some sand. The rules instructed them to do that, and to set up their little piles within two club-lengths of the hole and tee off for the next one. Teeing grounds and putting surfaces were not separated until late in the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, in less than one playing day a hole could become a quarry, the putting surface around it a complex of dunes. Drainpipes, of the size standard in the town of St. Andrews, were used to cut the holes, and eventually to line them. The diameter of old St. Andrews drainpipes is the size of golf holes today. The fact that putters no longer putt through a dune complex owes much to George Grant, the second African-American dentist to graduate from Harvard Dental School. In 1899, he was issued a patent for a wooden golf tee, but he did not take his tee to market. In 1924, William Lowell, a white dentist in Maplewood, New Jersey, extracted from a wooden dowel the shape familiar now, and called it the Reddy tee. He paid Walter Hagen and Joe Kirkwood to use Reddy tees and leave them behind as they walked off after their drives. The museum's pretty patterns of tees behind glass suggest some variant of cuneiform writing. They include tees shaped like bottles, tees shaped like carrots, a zinc tee, a Bakelite tee, a tee with a stem of corkscrewed wire. But the basic shape and substance has stayed the same since 1924. In the nineteen-eighties, environmentally sensitive, politically correct golf tees were made out of compressed fertilizer.

Jerris lingers before a scene that affects him more than any other—two photographs and two very dark golf balls from Stalag Luft III. "Allied soldiers in a couple of P.O.W. camps were permitted to construct some primitive golf holes within the confines of the camp," he said, explaining the pictures—the obstacle mounds, the impromptu flagstick, the chain-link fencing, the barracks beyond the severely straight fairway. "The Red Cross was allowed to supply them with golf clubs, but, because of the rationing of rubber during the war, golf balls were impossible to come by. The prisoners made golf balls—so much like the featheries—out of strips of rubber and leather from their shoes. Tobacco pouches, things like that, were stuffed inside the ball. In a couple of camps, they actually had formalized golf clubs with regular competitions. The two shoe-leather balls were given to the museum by Pat Ward-Thomas, the British golf writer, who was one of the P.O.W.s. One camp had an old printing press. The National Archives has a series of newsletters printed by it. Soon I'll be going to Washington to look at those records." ♦



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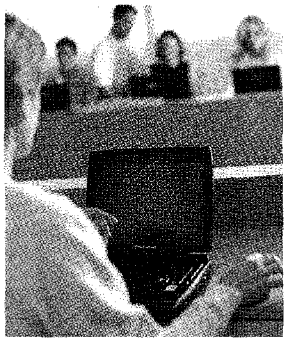
MEETINGS MOVE THE MARKETPLACE

Trends in Meetings and Incentive Trips

By Cheryl-Anne Sturken

Whether your meeting is held on a cruise ship or in a hotel, the agenda will be strikingly clear: Improve the bottom line. A meeting's success—where the company's vision is conveyed and expectations are met—rests on the shoulders of corporate meeting planners. They, in turn, rely on their partners in the hospitality industry to provide the tools that enable real achievement.



Cover: The Crystal Plaza, an informal two-story gathering place aboard the 950-passenger Crystal Symphony, boasts a waterfall and grand piano. *Top:* The Avenue Saloon is one of many lounges aboard the Crystal Harmony. *Above:* The Crystal Cruises University@Sea program allows guests to learn more about all aspects of computing.

MEETING TRENDS

Making it all work

With growing frequency, planners are requesting and negotiating certain crucial elements:

- **Value** In 2002 surfing the Web for low rates at pricey properties became a sport, but the sale may soon be ending. The 2003 National Lodging Forecast by Ernst & Young reports that the lodging industry is showing signs of stabilizing. Seasoned meeting planners, however, are looking beyond the room rate. Items such as complimentary room upgrades, cocktail receptions, and access to the fitness center make all the difference for busy attendees who live in a world of twenty-four-hour availability.
- **Service** As elsewhere in the business world, the hospitality sector has cut costs and trimmed staff. But a high level of service remains the hallmark of properties that attract—and keep—their clients. "I expect a hotel to deliver service from the moment my attendees encounter the valet and bellhop to the moment they check out," says Irene Scott, corporate meeting planner for the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta.
- **Technology** The technological needs of meetings have gone far beyond the realm of flip charts. Hotel chains such as Fairmont Hotels & Resorts and InterContinental Hotels & Resorts are investing millions in capital improvements–offering wireless capability and high-speed Internet access in meeting and guest rooms–along with in-house support crucial for companies that lack the manpower to bring along their own IT staff. "A hotel's crew trained in PowerPoint and Internet applications makes all the difference to me," says Robin Gesling, meeting supervisor for BioScience Communications.
- **Security** Without question, September 11th brought security concerns to the forefront. "Safety and security are my first concerns when planning a meeting," says Tim Bone, director of global travel and corporate aviation for Gap, the retail giant. "I want well-lit hallways and a staff that screens everything from FedEx packages to flower deliveries."

SPOTLIGHT ON

FAIRMONT HOTELS & RESORTS

Tom Storey, executive vice president of business development and strategy for Fairmont Hotels & Resorts, discusses the chain's growing presence in the United States and its commitment to corporate meetings.

M&C: *What's new in Fairmont's U.S. expansion?*
Storey: Last year, we made three major acquisitions: the Orchid in Hawaii, the Monarch in Washington, D.C., and the Sonoma Mission Inn and Spa in California. They are major meeting properties that are distinctive for their spa and golf amenities.

M&C: *What services are you offering that target business meetings?*
Storey: All meeting and guest rooms are equipped with high-speed Internet and wireless capabilities. To support that, we offer twenty-four-hour technical assistance at no cost to the client. The newly created position of conference services concierge at our bigger hotels is dedicated to providing technical support for each business group's meeting. This year we will roll out our Global Sales Solution that promises a one-hour response to requests for proposal.

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Cover: courtesy of Crystal Cruises; *this page top right:* Fairmont Hotels & Resorts; *left:* Crystal Cruises.

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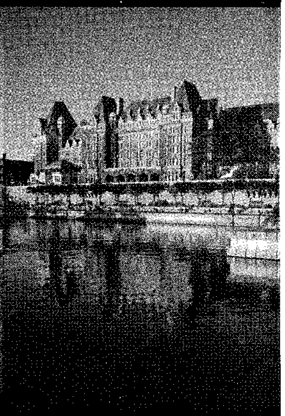

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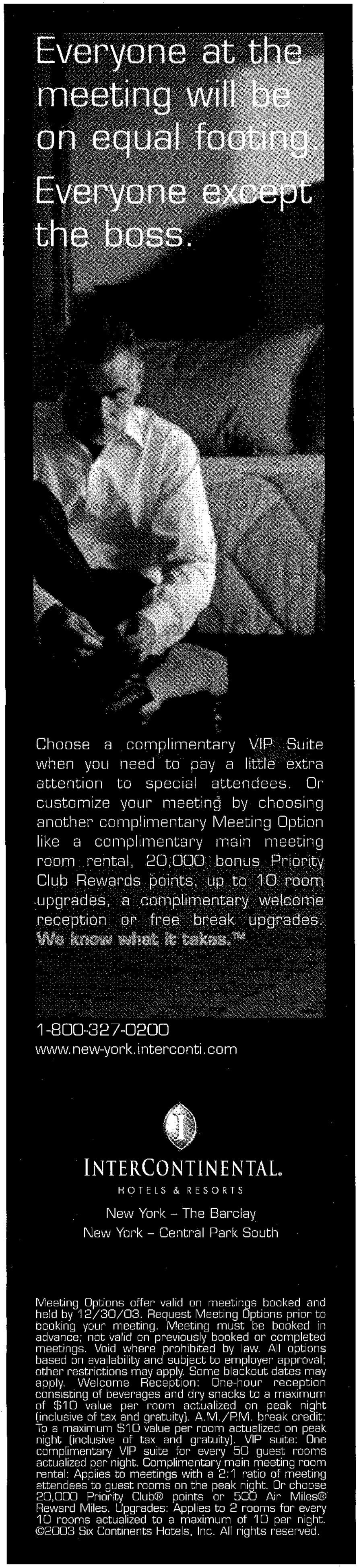

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With such priorities on the table, hotels have responded by including their directors of security in client meetings. "We want our guests to know they are protected—with the least amount of intrusion during their stay," says Rocco Castellano, director of security at InterContinental The Barclay New York.

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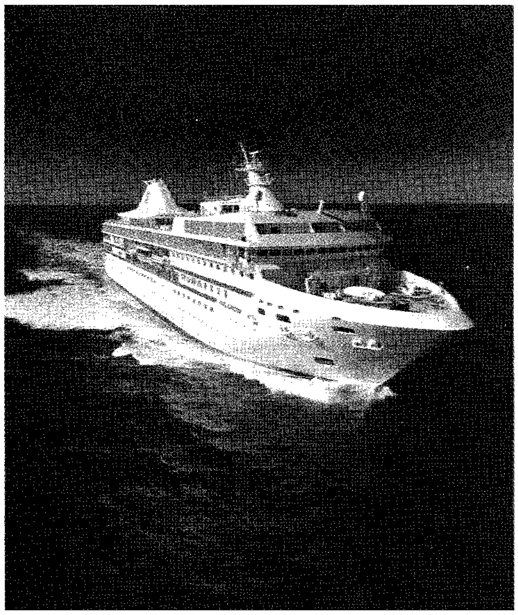
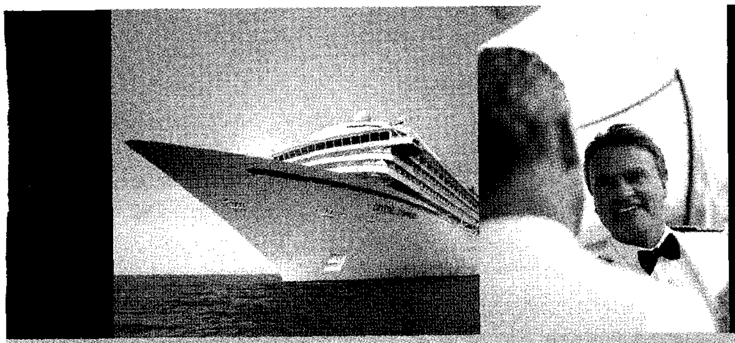
The upshot? The industry is enjoying considerable growth. Cruise Lines International Association estimates that 15,412 new berths debuted in 2002 alone, and by 2006, forty-two new ships are scheduled to part the waters.

Cheryl-Anne Sturken is a senior editor at Meetings & Conventions *magazine; cruise reporting by* M&C *senior editor Carla Benini.*



Top: Just like its artist namesake, the Paul Gauguin from Radisson Seven Seas Cruises seeks the beauty and serenity of Tahiti and Polynesia. *Above:* The Fairmont Washington, D.C., uses the brilliant colors of nature to set a relaxing yet vibrant tone throughout the entire property.

Top: courtesy of Radisson Seven Seas Cruises; *bottom:* Fairmont Hotels & Resorts



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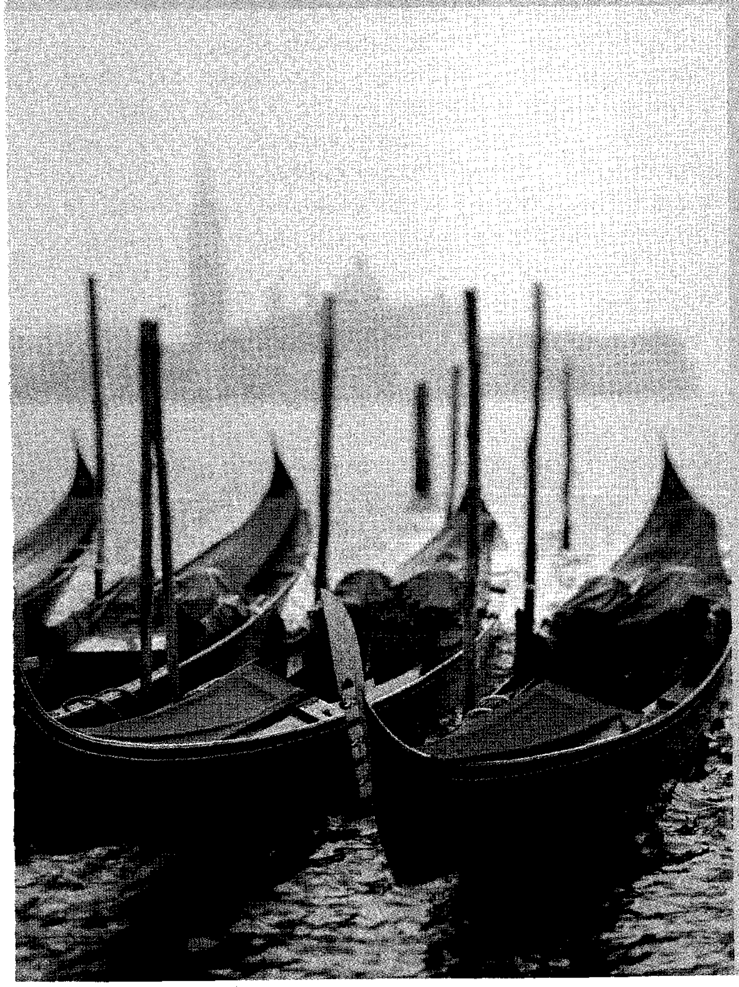

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PROFILES

THE DEVIL'S ACCOUNTANT

Noam Chomsky's criticism of America's role in the world has increased his isolation—and his audience.

BY LARISSA MacFARQUHAR

On Thursday evenings at M.I.T., Noam Chomsky, one of the greatest minds of the twentieth century and one of the most reviled, teaches a class about politics. There are nearly two hundred students and not enough chairs, so latecomers sit or lie down on the floor, which gives the class the air of a teach-in. On a recent evening, the students came to hear Chomsky speak about Iraq. He sat with his arms folded, a little hunched over on his stool, and began to talk into a microphone. He was wearing what he usually wears: shirt, sweater, jeans, sneakers. His hair curled toward the middle of his neck and looked as though he didn't pay it much attention. He spoke in a quiet monotone.

"When I look at the arguments for this war, I don't see anything I could even laugh at," he said. "You don't undertake violence on the grounds that maybe by some miracle something good will come out of it. Yes, sometimes violence does lead to good things. The Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor led to many very good things. If you follow the trail, it led to kicking Europeans out of Asia—that saved tens of millions of lives in India alone. Do we celebrate that every year?"

Chomsky told the students that the current Administration was essentially the same as the first Bush Administration and the Reagan Administration, and therefore could not be trusted to replace a tyrant. "The first foreign leader invited to the White House by George Bush No. 1 was Mobutu, who was one of the worst gangsters in modern African history," Chomsky said. "Another one they loved was General Suharto. His record easily compares with Saddam Hussein's. Another one they adored was Marcos of the Philippines. In every single one of these cases, the people now in Washington supported them right through their worst atrocities. Are these the people you would ask to bring freedom to Iraqis?"

A student wearing a red V-neck sweater raised his hand to ask a question. "I just was wondering whether this is really a strong argument if you are talking about the motives of the government," he began, in a European accent.

"I'm talking about expectations," Chomsky interrupted.

"If Saddam is a monster," the student went on, "what does it matter, actually, who is going to get rid of him? If you look at the Second World War, the alliance with Stalin was also not a very nice thing, but it was absolutely necessary."

"Well, let's pick a worse monster than Saddam Hussein," Chomsky said. "Suppose we could get Saddam Hussein to conquer North Korea. Would you be in favor of it?"

Chomsky can be brutal in argument, but except for the words themselves there is no outward indication that he is attacking. The expression on his face doesn't change. He never raises his voice. In fact, his voice is so quiet that, unless he uses a microphone, it is difficult to hear him. He gives his words so little force that they scarcely leave his mouth. His eyes, too, are recessed deeply into his face; they are so narrow that they are almost closed, the right eye more than the left, and are protected by metal-framed glasses.

"The Second World War is a slightly different story," Chomsky continued. "The United States and Britain fought the war, of course, but not primarily against Nazi Germany. The war against Nazi Germany was fought by the Russians. The German military forces were overwhelmingly on the Eastern Front."

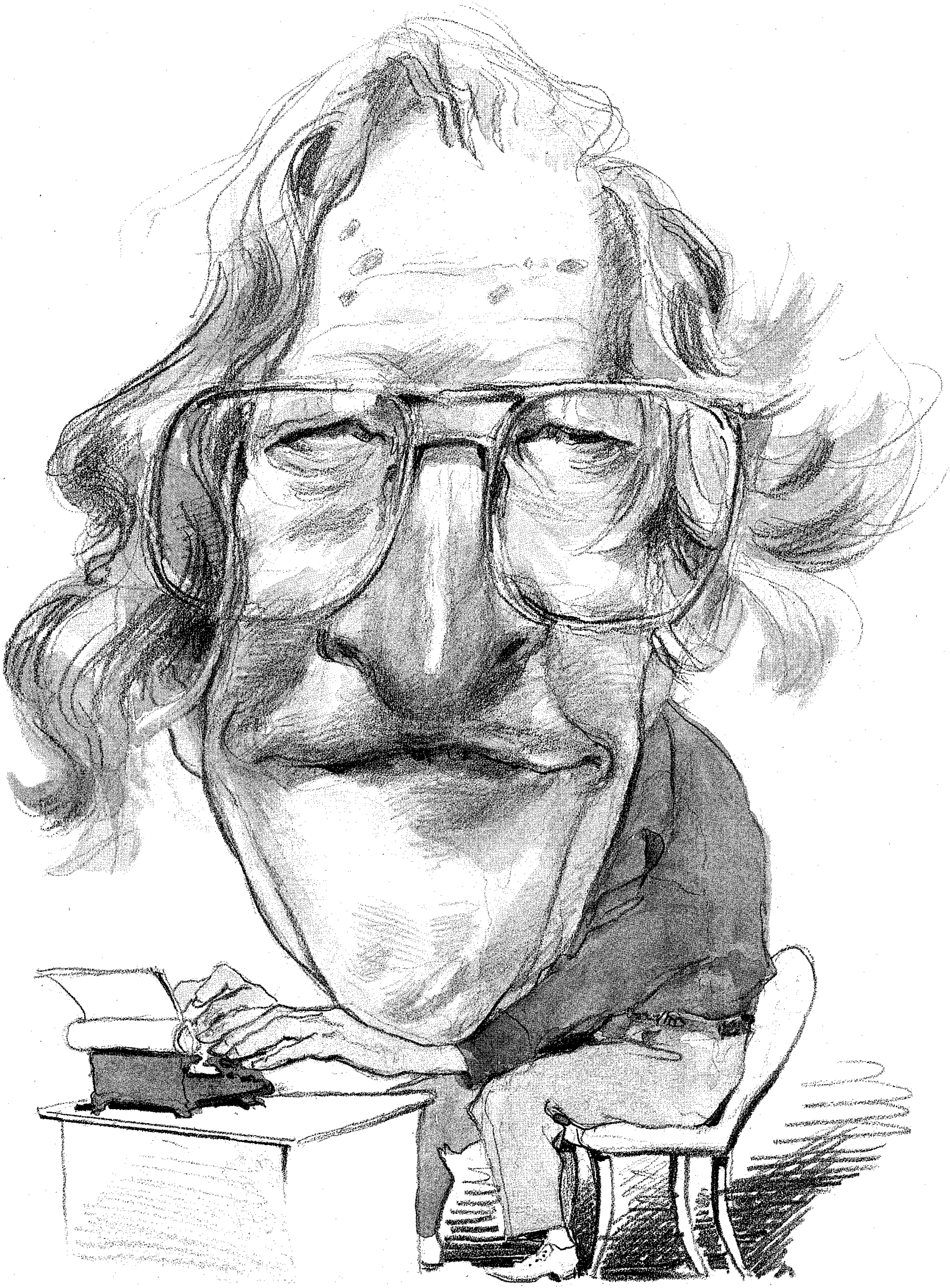
"But the world was better off," the student persisted.

"First of all, you have to ask yourself whether the best way of getting rid of Hitler was to kill tens of millions of Russians. Maybe a better way was not supporting him in the first place, as Britain and the United States did. O.K.? But you're right, it has nothing to do with motives—it has to do with expectations. And actually if you're interested in expectations there's more to say. By Stalingrad in 1942, the Russians had turned back the German offensive, and it was pretty clear that Germany wasn't going to win the war. Well, we've learned from the Russian archives that Britain and the U.S. then began supporting armies established by Hitler to hold back the Russian advance. Tens of thousands of Russian troops were killed. Suppose you're sitting in Auschwitz. Do you want the Russian troops to be held back?"

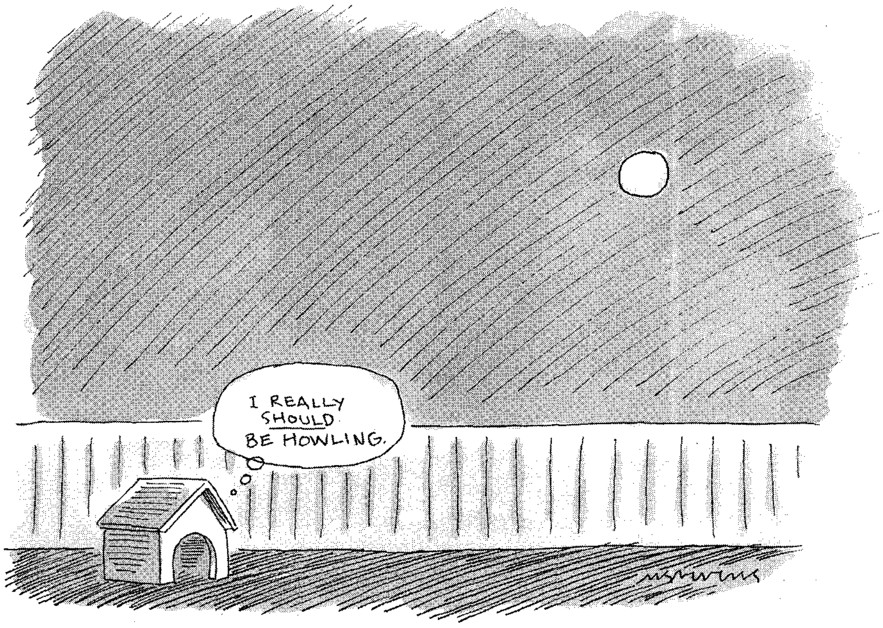
The student was silent.

Chomsky always refuses to talk about motives in politics. Like many theorists of universal humanness, he often seems baffled, even repelled, by the thought of actual people and their psychologies. He says he has no heroes, and he doesn't believe in leaders. This refusal to talk about political motives is in one sense a great weakness, because it amounts to a refusal to take seriously the difference between Administrations, or even between countries, and is by extension a refusal to consider the possibility, short of revolution, of significant political change. It also results in what have become characteristically outrageous Chomsky comparisons. When Chomsky likened the September 11th attacks to Clinton's bombing of a factory in Khartoum, many found the comparison not only absurd but repugnant: how could he speak in the same breath of an attack intended to maximize civilian deaths and one intended to minimize them? But, in another sense, Chomsky's argument was a powerful one. For him, the relevant issue was not whether the bombing was conducted specifically in order to kill people (motive) but whether it could be reasonably expected to do so. If there was a reasonable possibility that the factory manufactured medicine rather than arms, then the potential ef-

DAVID LEVINE



In other countries, Chomsky is a superstar whose speeches attract crowds of thousands, sometimes tens of thousands.


I REALLY SHOULD BE HOWLING.

fects of a bombing upon Sudan's citizens (the number of people who would die without the drugs it supplied—several thousand, according to the Boston *Globe*) was properly part of the moral calculus. Chomsky's logic is the unforgiving, mathematical logic of tort law: the philosopher Avishai Margalit has called him "the Devil's accountant." His moral calculus is a simple arithmetic. Nothing exculpates or complicates the sheer number of the dead.

Chomsky's refusal to consider motives in politics is not just a moral impulse; it is also an intellectual position. He believes that a discussion of individual motives is pointless because politics is driven by the economic interests of élite institutions. "Take Robert McNamara," Chomsky says. "I'm sure he's a nice man. The actions that he was responsible for are outrageous because of the social and economic institutions within which he was acting more or less reflexively." The word "reflexively" is significant—it sounds, at times, as though Chomsky were describing a kind of political behaviorism. But he is a rationalist: central both to the linguistics for which he first became famous and to his political thinking is the belief that the human mind contains at birth the structures of thought—even moral thought—through which it perceives the world. Élites, then, in his view, act selfishly, on their own behalf, but this selfishness follows an institutional logic rather than an individual one. They are morally culpable, and yet they can scarcely act otherwise.

It might seem strange that an anarchist libertarian like Chomsky, committed to the idea that people are free and self-determining, should think about politics in such institutional terms, but this is an old paradox. By rejecting, in the name of individual freedom, the idea that people are formed by their circumstances (he is not a Marxist), Chomsky dismisses as inessential everything that makes people individual—all their culture and history and experience. This move follows from the rationalist tradition: if reason is what is most important about humans—what separates them from animals—and if reason is universal, then it follows that humans should be, at core, the same. Chomsky finds this idea congenial: being of a logical rather than an anthropological or literary temperament, he has never been attracted to the notion that psychological originality or cultural variety is essential to what it means to be human. Politically, though, this has always been a dangerous move (the Jacobin move), for it allows the theorist not to take seriously any argument that departs from rationality as the theorist defines it. There is no need to pay attention to motive—what people say they want and why they want it—because their true desires are already written in the logic of their reason. There can be no disagreement, then, only truth and error; no differences, only mistakes, or lies.

Back in the classroom, Chomsky's co-teacher asked whether one of the students wanted to try to make a case for the war in Iraq. A round-faced young man near the door raised his hand. "I think the most central claim for the pro-war movement is the liberation of the Iraqi people," the student said. "That's been the hardest one for the left to counter. I think that at the core the best of what Professor Chomsky has been able to say is that in the past the U.S. hasn't done it."

"Not just hasn't done it, has supported the opposite," Chomsky broke in. "And not just the U.S. but the people currently in office. . . . Suppose the goal is to liberate Iraq. How come it's not proposed at the United Nations?"

"There are a lot of answers to that, like I think—" the student began.

"Really? I don't know of any," Chomsky interrupted. "But here's a way to liberate Iraq, an easy way, and it will knock off all the most common arguments. No U.S. casualties, no threat to Israel, good chance of bringing democracy, probably be welcomed by the population, they'll allow plenty of oil to flow, Saddam will be torn to shreds, they'll destroy every trace of weapons of mass destruction. Help *Iran* invade Iraq. They could do it very easily if we gave them any support at all."

"But—"

"Excuse me. They have a fair chance of introducing democracy. The U.S. doesn't. The reason is that the majority of Iraq's population is Shiite. Shiites are likely to want an accommodation with Iran, but the U.S. will never allow them to have a voice in the government because it doesn't want the government to have an accommodation with Iran. . . . What's the downside?"

The student looked baffled. "Are you honestly advocating that we help Iran invade Iraq?" he asked.

"No. You are," Chomsky said. The students laughed, startled by this unexpected twist. "Proposing that Iran attack Iraq is insane. But it makes a lot more sense than having the U.S. attack. Are you saying that the people who supported Saddam while he was committing his worst atrocities are more likely to liberate the Iraqis than the people who opposed him?"

Chomsky continued to berate the student for a long time, ignoring his attempts to break in. People cried out "Let him talk!" but to no avail. Another student stood up and called out a request that he be allowed to help, but Chomsky ignored him. People made loud, disgruntled noises in protest at this treatment, but Chomsky ignored those, too. Finally, the first student sat down.

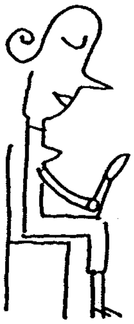
Chomsky told the class that the only justifiable way for Saddam to be removed was by his own people but that Iraqis had been so crippled by sanctions that they were unable to do so. "For ten years, while killing a couple of hundred thousand Iraqis, we've also been preventing Saddam from being overthrown," he said. "Marcos, Duvalier, Suharto, Ceauşescu, you go through the list, that's the way they were overthrown. If we would stop impeding that and allow it to happen, it probably would."

Chomsky is not a pacifist on principle, but when it comes to the United States he has never supported an intervention. The country's record is just too damning, he says: to expect better in the future is to indulge in willful self-delusion. States, he believes, can never be moral actors. But when asked to suggest a better way—an alternative to intervention in, say, Bosnia or Kosovo or Rwanda, to stop massacres currently taking place—he has no ideas to offer. Those are, he says, difficult cases. He does not know how to think about them.

This opposition to what he scornfully calls the "new military humanism" has alienated Chomsky from many former admirers. During the sixties, he was a hero to those who, like him, opposed the Vietnam War. His criticism of American involvement in Latin America in the eighties was echoed by mainstream liberals. But in the last ten years, as American ventures abroad have come to seem to many on the left a more complicated affair, it has been said that Chomsky's thinking has grown simplistic and rigid: that he is stuck in the past, believing that, because America's intervention in Vietnam was futile and immoral, all American intervention must be futile and immoral. When his book about the September 11th attacks, "9-11," became a best-seller, many people were shocked. "He used to have this great, dignified passion to him," Christopher Hitchens, who, until his own political change of heart, defended Chomsky, says. "I thought he was an exemplary man, who had almost no distance between what he believed and what he was willing to do. But 'silent genocide' in Afghanistan!" — "silent genocide" is how Chomsky described the U.S. bombing. "Now, that is the gleam of utter lunacy piercing through."

As Chomsky has become increasingly alienated from the mainstream, though, his role in the American political debate has grown more important, not less. In the sixties, he was one of many protesting the war; now, when he opposes bombing Afghanistan, he is almost alone. It is not, then, really surprising that "9-11" was a best-seller. For those who doubt the consensus of the nineties and the war on terrorism, Chomsky is almost the only voice there is.

Chomsky's intellectual influence is still extraordinary. On an academic list of the ten most frequently cited sources of all time (a list that includes the Bible), he ranks eighth—above Hegel and Cicero, just below Plato and Freud. The revolution he started in linguistics in the late nineteen-fifties captured the public imagination the way Einstein's revolution in physics did. Leonard Bernstein used Chomsky's theories to analyze music; literary critics used them in the interpretation of poetry. Psychologists studied children's acquisition of language almost for the first time. A new school of thought, cognitive science, arose, based on Chomsky's theory of language, along with notions about artificial intelligence. Philosophers started talking about ideas that hadn't been taken seriously since the time of Descartes.



What's more, although Chomsky long ago became alienated from the American political center, elsewhere in the world he is a superstar. Wherever he goes, he is sought after by mainstream politicians and the mainstream press, and when he speaks it is to audiences of thousands, sometimes tens of thousands. Last December, he gave a speech at St. Paul's Cathedral in London to an audience of two thousand; another thousand showed up without tickets and stood outside in the cold in the hope of getting in. The next day, nearly two thousand more—old lefties and new lefties, men with very long hair and men with very short hair—stood in line to hear him speak at the University of London. Outside the auditorium, people marched up and down selling copies of *Socialist Worker* and *Freedom,* an anarchist fortnightly. The organizers of the talk distributed leaflets that, with the slogan "Share Chomsky with a friend," encouraged the purchase of audiotapes. "I doubt there is any other American besides Bruce Springsteen who would have generated such a demand for tickets," Chomsky's introducer said to the crowd.

Chomsky's office is a narrow room with many bookshelves and two desks, each stacked with at least a hundred books, leaving barely any space to work. There are a few uncomfortable wooden chairs and a couple of windows that look out onto an alley. Chomsky sat at the desk farther from the door with his feet propped on an open drawer, as is his habit. The phone rang. It was someone calling to ask for his support for Lynne Stewart, a radical lawyer who had defended an Egyptian cleric against terrorist charges, and was now herself under arrest, accused of supporting terrorism. Chomsky receives countless calls like this one. He told the person that he simply could not do anything to help but would sign his name to a statement. The person offered to read it to him.

"I'm sure it's O.K.," Chomsky sighed, wanting to get off the phone and back to work. The person urged him to listen.

"O.K." He listened. "Yes, that's fine. Right. Bye." Chomsky hung up the phone. He looked tired. He rubbed his eyes under his glasses. "A thousand petitions," he said.

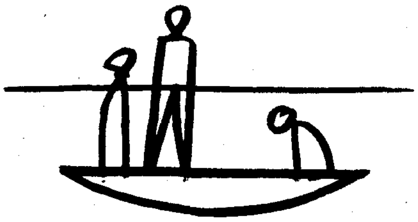
It is typical of Chomsky to have created an office in which there is nowhere comfortable to sit and no proper space to work. He seems genuinely indifferent to material things. Before his wife took over, he often gave away the copyrights to his books because he didn't read contracts. He would sign anything that was put in front of him. He will wear the same outfit every day for a week.

"My first impression of him was, like many people's, one of awe," Steven Pinker, an M.I.T. colleague, says. "There's a psychologist named Jonathan Haidt who studies what he calls moral awe, a feeling that you have around a Gandhi or a Mother Teresa. He believes that the very understatedness of the physical presentation seems proof of the purity and the nobility of the cause. I don't think it's by design, but I think the fact that Chomsky is so unflashy adds to the feeling of awe that people come away with. If he were a loudmouth, then people would have more doubts."

Chomsky's abstraction from the material world is temperamental, however, not dogmatic. In many ways, he and his wife, Carol, lead a conventional middle-class life. They live in Lexington, Massachusetts, a Boston suburb, in a large brown clapboard house that looks, inside, much like any other professor's house, with a mixture of modern furniture and ethnic pillows and wall hangings. When their children were little, they went on vacations to the Caribbean; they summer on Cape Cod. Chomsky loves to sail—at one point, he owned a small fleet of sailboats, plus a motorboat. "He doesn't do the kind of recreational things that other people do, like go to the movies," a friend of his says. "He thinks it's a waste of time. But he likes to be out of doors in the summer, he likes to swim in the lake and go sailing and eat junk food. Carol is looser than Noam. Well, everybody is." When Chomsky and Carol are in Cambridge, they usually watch an hour of television at night—"Law & Order" or some other cop show. Carol makes sure that they go to bed right afterward, and they wake up around eight. (It is commonly believed that Chomsky never sleeps, but this is not the case.) When their daughter Aviva was twelve, all her friends were getting Bat-Mitzvahed and she wanted to as well, but she was ineligible for Hebrew school because her family didn't belong to the local synagogue. Her demand that they join engendered a minor household crisis, but in the end Chomsky put his distaste aside and became a member. "Noam will always stop whatever he's doing and do something with the family," Carol says. "He is totally devoted. It's his outlet."

Chomsky's three children have reacted to their half-conventional, half-radical upbringing in various ways. Aviva, the eldest, is the most like her father. She is a historian of Latin America, and teaches at Salem State College, in Massachusetts. She is also an activist: she has protested the working conditions at the Colombia mine from which a Salem power plant buys its coal, and the unfair labor practices of an egg farm in Maine. Harry, the youngest, is the least political of the three: he is an aspiring violinist who lives in Berkeley and works part time in computer programming. Diane, the middle child, moved to Nicaragua in her mid-twenties to work as a volunteer on a Sandinista newspaper; she fell in love with a Sandinista activist, and stayed. "She went native," Carol says dryly. Carol has tried, over the years, to stage minor bourgeois interventions to alleviate what she sees as her daughter's appalling penury, but Diane rejects creature comforts as immoral. Once, when Diane was away, Carol conspired with Diane's boyfriend to buy the family a washing machine (he does not share Diane's aversion to consumerism and, indeed, would be quite happy to move to America), but, to Carol's despair, Diane never hooked the machine up. "Her life is pitiful," Carol says. "She says, 'Ninety-five per cent of the world lives this way, why should I live better?' "

Chomsky's children never rebelled, and Chomsky, too, is in some ways a logical product of his upbringing. His father, William, was born in 1896 in Ukraine and emigrated to Baltimore as a young man; his mother, Elsie, was born in Russia in 1903, in a town near Minsk, and emigrated to Brooklyn in 1906. Both came from Orthodox families and left home when they were young to move to Philadelphia. They both rejected the religiosity of their parents, but they both trained as Hebrew teachers and cared a great deal about promoting Hebrew as a living language. They were married shortly after they met, in the summer of 1927. Avram Noam, their first child, was born on December 7, 1928; David, their second, was born six years later. Although the family spoke English at home, Noam and David became fluent in Hebrew when they were young. There was not much talk of God in the house, but the family kept kosher and went to Sabbath services. While the boys were growing up, William Chomsky became well known as a Hebrew scholar; in 1957, he published what became a classic history, "Hebrew: The Eternal Language." Elsie wrote two children's books about courageous young Jewish heroes who risk their lives fighting evil Arabs to found settlements in Israel.



Chomsky was preoccupied with politics even as a child, and his views have not changed significantly since he was ten. At ten, he published his first article, in the school newspaper: an editorial on the fall of Barcelona in the Spanish Civil War. Later, he read Orwell's account of the war, "Homage to Catalonia," and ever since he has referred to the anarcho-syndicalist Barcelona that Orwell described as an example of the kind of worker-run, libertarian order that he believes to be the best form of government. During junior high school, Chomsky spent a lot of time in Manhattan with an uncle, a legally blind, hunchbacked Communist named Milton Kraus, who owned a newsstand at Broadway and Seventy-second Street that became a kind of street-corner salon for radical conversation. Kraus got him interested in Communism, but by thirteen or so Chomsky was over Marx. He was too young to be caught up in the debates over Stalin and Trotsky that engaged people ten or fifteen years older; he was more attracted to contemporary anarchists like Rudolf Rocker, who wanted to combine classical liberalism's aspiration to minimal government with socialism's condemnation of wage slavery. In New York, Chomsky liked to hang around the secondhand bookstores on Fourth Avenue and pick up obscure radical literature. In the early nineteen-forties, he discovered an extremely obscure group that called itself the Marlenites (from Marx and Lenin), and maintained that the war was an international class struggle in disguise—the

American and European ruling classes secretly working together to crush the European proletariat. "I didn't believe any of it, but it was intriguing," Chomsky says now. "Their critique of the Soviet Union and Western imperialism struck me as well thought out."

In the circles in which Chomsky grew up, the measure of a boy was his skill in Hebrew. Since Chomsky was the best, he was the leader. "It wasn't the measure of intelligence so much as focus," Carol says. Chomsky attended Camp Massad, a Hebrew-language summer camp in the Poconos; he organized Zionist youth groups and Hebrew-culture youth groups. Carol's family, the Schatzes, belonged to the same synagogue as the Chomskys, and she first met Noam when she was three and he was five. When Chomsky became interested in Carol, he used his influence to make sure that she got a place in Hebrew summer camp, so that she would speak the language well enough to be worthy of him. Carol was then, as she is now, small and slightly built, though her hair was shorter—now white, it grows nearly to her shoulders. She decided in her teens that she disliked wearing lipstick, and she has stuck to that. She and Chomsky were married when she was nineteen and he was twenty-one.

TRADING SPACES
THIS WEEK:
THE HATFIELDS
&
THE McCOYS
Hey, y'all! Guess what we did with that thousand bucks?
We blew it all at the track! SUCKERS!!
Well, you know what WE did?
We sold all your CHEAP UGLY CRAP on EBAY!!!

During his first year in college, at the University of Pennsylvania, Chomsky was bored and considered dropping out, but then he started to study with Zellig Harris, a linguistics professor who was involved in just the sort of left-Zionist politics that Chomsky was. Actually, Chomsky had met Harris when he was a child; the Chomskys had been to seders at the Harrises' house. "When I was a kid, Zellig's father was very famous," he said and grinned. "He was the *mohel*, who circumcised every Jewish boy, including me." It was only fitting, with such delicate proto-Oedipal dynamics already in place, that Harris should become Chomsky's mentor.

By the time Chomsky arrived at Penn, just after the war, Harris had been for a decade or so a kind of elder statesman to the New York branch of a student organization called Avukah (Hebrew for "torch"). Nathan Glazer, the Harvard sociologist, was a member of Avukah when he was a student at City College in New York during the war and knew Harris then. "He was very dry," Glazer says. "Intense. He would come to New York and stay at the Biltmore Hotel, which we thought was very grand, because we were all very poor and grubby. There was no question that we were impressed with him. And we felt that his rage was enormous." The group consisted of young Zionists who opposed the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine: they identified themselves with the leftist kibbutz settlers who were in favor of a binational socialist state—Jewish workers and Arab workers united together. This notion did not then seem as implausible or as radical as it did after 1948, when it would be called anti-Zionist rather than Zionist. It was supported by many of the well-known intellectuals who were associated with Hebrew University: Martin Buber, Hannah Arendt, Erich Fromm. Besides, Zionism in any form was not much debated among mainstream American Jewish intellectuals. "Most of them had divorced themselves in a very radical way from Jewish interests and Jewish concerns," Glazer says. "Look at the people around *Partisan Review*. When the American Jewish Committee started *Commentary*, in 1945, no one there had any Zionist background but me—neither Irving Kristol nor Robert Warshow nor Clement Greenberg."

It was Harris's politics, then, rather than his linguistics, that first drew Chomsky to him, and in this sense Chomsky's career as a linguist was something of an accident. "Noam thought that he would probably end up being a Hebrew-school principal somewhere," Carol says. "His mother used to say, 'I walk up and down the streets of Philadelphia looking for a sign that says "Wanted: Linguist." I never see it!' " Although Chomsky was brought up in a household preoccupied by issues of language—of Hebrew—he was not, as a child, enthralled by languages per se. He has never been the type to revel in the variety of tongues—to delight in strange words and strange sounds. He was interested in language as a window onto the mind.

Chomsky studied mathematics, logic, and philosophy, and for his undergraduate and master's thesis he devised an eccentric but ingenious analysis of modern Hebrew grammar. He stayed in Philadelphia for graduate school, and in the early fifties he was awarded a junior fellowship at Harvard—a great honor, which paid him to do research for several years. In a burst of fierce work in Cambridge, he wrote a long, dense book (later published as "The Logical Structure of Linguistic Theory") and submitted a chapter of it to serve as his Ph.D. thesis. The thesis was so abstract that most linguists who read it found it impenetrable, but shortly after receiving his doctorate he was hired by a university used to such productions, M.I.T.

On Thursday afternoons, Chomsky teaches a seminar on linguistic foundations. It is not a technical syntax class; its purpose is to induct new graduate students into the Chomskyan mode of thought. In the seminar's second meeting this year, the subject was ethology, the study of animal behavior. Twenty or so students sat around the table in the linguistics conference room. Chomsky sat at one end, leaning back in his chair, a yellow legal pad balanced on his knees. One of the students cracked a joke and Chomsky smiled. He has an unexpectedly warm and lovely smile. The gap between his front teeth shows as he grins, and he looks like a happy boy who has just pulled off a wonderful prank.

That week, the class had read an article criticizing the behaviorist idea that learning was simply a matter of associating stimuli with reinforcement. Give a pigeon a food pellet after it has pecked a lighted button, the behaviorist model went, and after a while the pigeon will learn to associate the two; praise a child for saying "two feet" rather than "two foots" and he will pick up grammar. The article argued that, on the contrary, to talk about a general-purpose learning process made no more sense than to talk about a general-purpose sensing organ. Learning was a function of specialized cognitive "modules" in the brain, just as sensing was a function of specialized organs like the eye and the ear.

The student giving the presentation that week got up and went to the blackboard and sketched two nerve cells with ions passing back and forth across the synapse between them. This, he explained, was the Hebb synapse. Donald Hebb was a psychologist who, in the late nineteen-forties, identified what he claimed to be the neurological underpinning for the behaviorist model of learning. Chomsky loathes behaviorism. Naturally, he wasn't going to let these neurological pretensions go unchallenged.

"There's no proof that there is any neurological basis even for computations as basic as addition," he told the class.

"But we know addition takes place in cells," a student objected, in a loud voice. "If you put in twice as many ions, you get twice as much voltage." The student had a crewcut and wore a light-brown long-sleeved T-shirt.

"But there's no evidence that that has anything to do with computation, the mental process," Chomsky pointed out.

"I don't think it would be too difficult to prove," the student said.

"You try it," Chomsky said, irritated. "If you prove it, they'll publish it in *Science* tomorrow."

The behaviorist model of learning was one of Chomsky's first targets of attack after he appeared on the academic scene, in the late nineteen-fifties. B. F. Skinner, in his 1957 book, "Verbal Behavior," had argued that language, like other behavior, could be described in physical, observable terms, without reference to thought or any other mental process. Two years later, in the journal *Language*, Chomsky published a review of "Verbal Behavior" that was among the most devastating and influential reviews ever written. He argued that Skinner had not arrived at a method of studying speech objectively; he had merely covered up traditional notions with scientific-sounding terms. To claim, for instance, that a painting was a "controlling stimulus" that regulated a person's "verbal response" was meaningless: since the person might respond in an infinite number of ways, his response was clearly determined as much by his internal disposition as by anything objective about the painting. Chomsky pointed out that, similarly, it was absurd to suppose that Skinner-style training was more important in the development of language than human beings' native mental endowment. After all, children of different intelligence, raised in vastly different environments, acquired language at much the same pace, and very few (if any) of them were systematically tutored or rewarded. Moreover, children acquired grammar in a way suggesting that they were following rules rather than mechanically imitating what they heard. (Almost all children, for instance, make the mistake of overgeneralizing the rule that to form a plural you add "s," saying "foots" and "sheeps" instead of "feet" and "sheep.")

Even the most grammatically punctilious and linguistically rich milieu could not account for the infinite variety of wholly novel sentences that young children could utter and understand, Chomsky concluded. It was preposterous, therefore, to talk about language as a matter of learning through reinforcement. In some crucial way, grammatical rules must be already there, hardwired into the brain, into something like a language organ. The ability to speak developed naturally, like the ability to see or hear. There was, in this quintessentially human endeavor, no need for pellets. Chomsky's review was calm, it was precise, it was brilliantly argued; it was even, in places, funny. It effectively destroyed behaviorism—a school of thought that had dominated the human sciences for more than half a century.

It wasn't just behaviorism that Chomsky wanted dead by the end of the class; he wanted the broader empiricist notion of inductive scientific reasoning gone as well. The student in the light-brown shirt had, helpfully, begun of his own accord to argue for the empiricist point of view. Scientists had to start from some piece of knowledge and generate a theory from it, he said. Without factual constraints, how could they decide what to believe? But science didn't work that way, Chomsky told him. A scientist came up with a theory first and then went looking for the facts to fit it. If the facts didn't fit, he added a fix here or a patch there until the theory worked again, or else he discarded the facts entirely, hoping they'd be explained away later.

"But surely neurological correlates are one piece of data that you can use to constrain your model," the student protested.

"For any datum there are infinitely many theories that can explain it," Chomsky said. "That's just elementary logic."

Later, the class moved on from neurology to bees. It was well known that a bee that had located a source of food habitually returned home and performed an elaborate "waggle dance" that contained information about the direction and distance of the food from the hive. The vast majority of scientists assumed that conveying this information was the purpose of the dance: that the dance was, in effect, a form of bee language. Chomsky, however, disliked the notion that such a minimally evolved creature as a bee could have language, because language was, to him, distinctly human; he also disliked the implication that language in humans was, like the waggle dance, a skill that had evolved because it was useful. Chomsky had, accordingly, seized on the work of a maverick scientist, A. M. Wenner, who claimed that although humans could detect information from the dance, the bees themselves did not: they found their way to food using only odor.

"You can't just assume that because something's there it is functional, or has been adapted for," Chomsky pointed out. "It could just be there. Crickets don't chirp so you can enjoy the summer evening." Crickets were a useful example for Chomsky, because scientists had managed to extract a lot of information from crickets' noises, but there was no evidence to suggest that crickets themselves could interpret the noises, or showed any interest in doing so. Despite the cricket example, however, nobody seemed convinced. It seemed very unlikely that bees might perform an elaborate dance for no reason other than sheer apian ebullience. And the idea that, even though the dance contained precise instructions about the location of food, bees might just not have figured them out seemed insane.

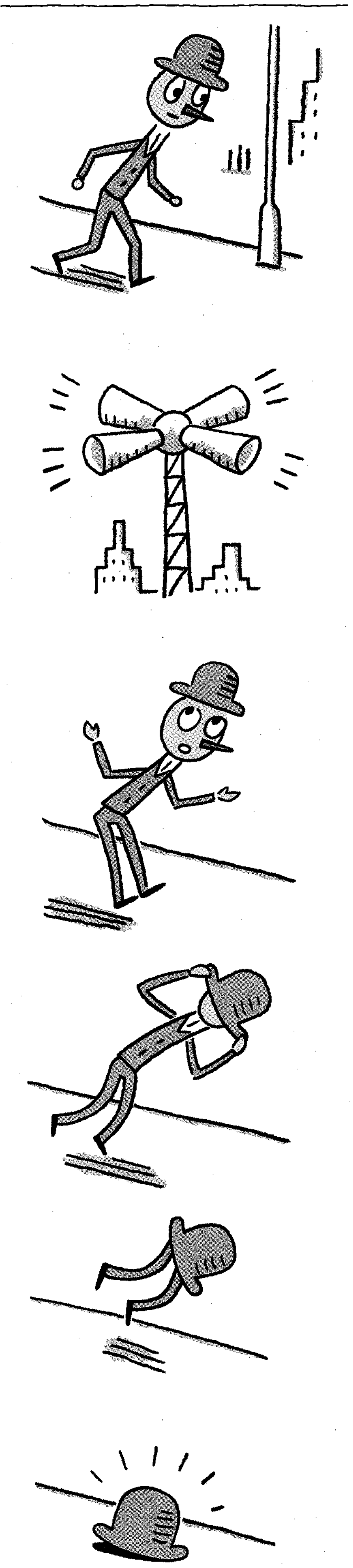
"I don't find that persuasive," a student protested. "I mean, by that logic you could say that linguists think grammatical agreement matters but speakers don't give a damn. The argument has no force!"

"It's possible that speakers don't give a damn," Chomsky said serenely. "You have to prove it."

Chomsky has always been ambivalent about evolution. He is enough of a conventional scientist to acknowledge its power as an explanation for most biological phenomena, but he resists applying it to language. If asked about this resistance, he will shrug and say that the state of our knowledge is such that any hypothesizing on the subject can only be the purest speculation. He will allude to Stephen Jay Gould and Richard Lewontin's theory of "spandrels"—side effects of evolution that are not selected for but arise as a consequence of other developments. He will say it is possible that we will discover in the future that language appeared in the human brain as a consequence of some as yet unknown physical law: perhaps biological systems like brains throw up a linguistic structure once they reach a certain level of complexity, in the way that certain compounds take on the structure of crystals.

Chomsky may be right to believe that language did not gradually evolve, but even he would admit that this idea is only speculation. He just *prefers* to think of the language organ as a self-enclosed system whose origins are mysterious. It is not for nothing that he has been called a "crypto-creationist." Steven Pinker, an admirer of both Chomsky and Darwin, thinks that Chomsky's distaste stems from a more general dislike of arguments that derive human qualities from utility. The theory of natural selection, after all, assumes that things evolve because they are useful; in that, it is a larger version of the behaviorist thesis that humans, like animals, do things in order to get stuff for themselves. And it is true that Chomsky believes that humans are driven by the desire for creative expression, not by anything so crass and petty as advantage. Daniel Dennett, a philosopher at Tufts University, believes that Chomsky's resistance is also due to a dislike of the ad-hoc, gadgetry aspect of evolution: Chomsky wants to think of language as a perfect, unified system.

Chomsky was not the first to think of language that way. A group of scholars called the Modistae, in the Middle Ages, and later, in the Renaissance, the French Port-Royal school believed that all languages were based on a universal grammar that reflected the structure of the mind of God. (Chomsky read the texts of both these schools as a young man



PHILIPPE PETIT-ROULET

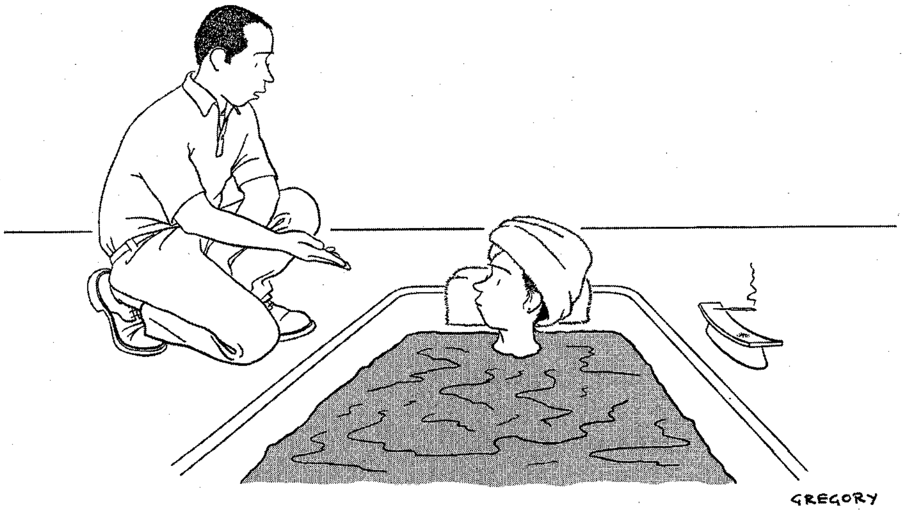
and refers often to their influence on him.) Some nineteenth-century linguists took it as their mission to uncover, disguised amid the polyglot confusion of modern dialects, the original tongue that Adam and Eve spoke in the Garden of Eden, which remained the only human language until the erection of the Tower of Babel.

Modern linguistics is generally agreed to have begun with an address that Sir William Jones, the Chief Justice of Bengal, gave in 1786 to the Royal Asiatic Society: Jones suggested that Sanskrit, Latin, and Greek originated in a common source, and he inspired several generations of scholars to compare sounds and meanings from one language to another, looking for similarities. They discovered that some words shifted in sound in a regular fashion from one language to another. Just as *pater* in Latin shifted to *Vater* in German and "father" in English, so *piscis* in Latin became *Fisch* in German and "fish" in English. By the end of the nineteenth century, the family relationship of the Indo-European languages had been decisively established. Around the same time, however, Franz Boas, a linguistically minded anthropologist who had emigrated to America from Germany, was growing irritated with the European tendency to force languages into the Latin mold. Just because Indo-European languages could be traced back to a common root didn't mean that all languages were poor relations of the same family. Boas saw in Native American languages, which were dying out fast, an opportunity and a mission: he decreed that, instead of studying dead languages or well-known living ones, linguists would travel across America collecting verbal arcana, like botanists hunting specimens. The mission paid off: it turned out that not only were Native American languages not related to Indo-European ones—they weren't even related to one another. Languages that had grown up right next to each other had no more in common than Tamil and Basque.

In the nineteen-twenties and thirties, a University of Chicago linguist, Leonard Bloomfield, disciplined Boas's anthropological linguistics into a full-fledged taxonomical science. Just as Skinner believed that a scientific psychology should devote its attention exclusively to observable behavior, so Bloomfield believed that a scientific linguistics should restrict itself to marks on the page and sounds in the mouth. In part because it confined itself within such tight, workable boundaries, Bloomfieldian linguistics was very successful; in fact, it was so successful that by the time Chomsky arrived in college, in the mid-nineteen-forties, many linguists felt that in a few years the field's work would be complete.

When Chomsky's first book, "Syntactic Structures," was published, in 1957, its revolutionary intentions were not immediately apparent. It was initially assumed to be a useful appendix to the Bloomfieldian literature, bringing syntax, which had been ignored for too long, into its purview. But a year later, beginning at a conference in Texas, Chomsky went on the attack. Bloomfieldians, he said, who had imagined themselves to be bringing scientific rigor to what had previously been a subject for the humanities, were not scientific at all: the point of science was to explain the world, and Bloomfieldians, by confining themselves to the surface ephemera of language, were merely describing it. To talk about languages as varied and unpredictable was to be hopelessly distracted by superficial differences, Chomsky said. A language was not a cultural artifact that existed out there, in the world: grammar came from within; it was part of the human biological endowment. Underneath all the variegated noise of culture, grammar had a universal structure, and the mission of the linguist was to discern it. It was not necessary to tromp sweatily about collecting polyglot data, as the Bloomfieldians had been doing for decades. If all languages were, at root, the same, then English was enough to go on, at least at first. Linguistics could be done in the office.

The Bloomfieldians fought back bitterly. They called Chomsky medieval (for his similarity to the Modistae), and they were scandalized by his disdain for data. For several years, linguistics conferences devolved into bloody battles. Chomsky gathered around him at M.I.T. a group of young students who were nearly as bellicose as he was. Robert Lees, one of this group, developed a style he later characterized as "calling people stupid"; an attack at a Linguistics Society meeting by Paul Postal, one of Chomsky's closest associates, was so extreme that it was stricken from the minutes.



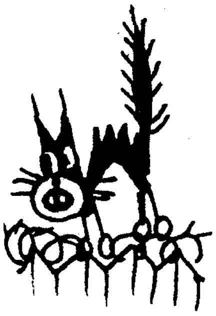
"This treatment cleanses your system of all its excess money."

Chomsky's students at M.I.T. felt themselves to be the vanguard of a revolution. For half a century, social scientists and philosophers had told themselves that the mind was murky and amorphous, impossible to study in a rigorous way, so it was better to ignore it. Chomsky declared that they were wrong: the mind was a beautiful system, and its construction was visible in language; he who solved language's puzzle would win the greatest prize of all, knowledge of the structure of thought. Chomsky's students were like a holy army; there was, in their attacks, a theological fervor. Heresies had to be stamped out. Truth and science were at stake! And at the root of the fervor was a nearly theological reverence for Chomsky himself. "It verged on worship," Robin Lakoff, a member of this group, later wrote. "To be in Chomsky's good graces meant . . . that you were worthy of him, you partook in some small way in the godhead." Chomsky, with his personal reserve, his quiet voice, and his astonishing mind, seemed to them a figure of pure reason, an instrument of truth. "Noam is not a human being," Jay Keyser, one of the M.I.T. group, once said. "He's an angel." Chomsky's revolution was entirely successful. Within a few years, Bloomfield's ideas were considered ridiculous.

Chomsky is not an activist by temperament. In photographs from the time of the Vietnam War, he looks much younger than he was, but it is clear that he was still a man of the nineteen-fifties, with his conventional clothes and his short, neat hair. He is not a marcher; not a rousing speaker; not one who thrills to crowds or succumbs to the ecstasy of the barricades. Even though he has been intensely involved in politics for forty years and it is hard to imagine that he does not get some sort of gratification from the adulatory crowds who come to hear him (his wife and his friends think he must, though he would never admit it), it is clear that, much of the time when he is engaged in political work, he would prefer to be alone. If there is one theme that recurs through all his work and all his life, it is isolation. Intervention, evolution, conversation, learning—all are intrusions into the hermetic sanctity of the self.

"He wishes the world would go away," Carol says. "That the world wouldn't require it. He wishes that every society would be decently democratic and everything would work and then he wouldn't have to involve himself. No, I don't think he enjoys it. If the world wasn't the way it is, everything would be easier. But the world is the way it is." Chomsky is involved in politics because what he perceives as injustice makes him violently angry. "He gets very upset," Carol says. "It hits him very, very hard. He can't stand it. Every morning he's reading the paper and clipping and muttering, 'Look at what Powell said,' and on and on and on. It infuriates him."

This is, no doubt, one reason that Chomsky, in his political speeches, tends to be unremittingly harsh, talking only of the horrors of past and present. He is not interested in utopia. He is impelled by duty and rage; sympathy, too, though of an abstract, impersonal sort—all injustices, all claims, all deaths seem to move him equally. He feels obliged to fight wrongs, but only as far as decency requires him to. Chomsky is often criticized for focussing on America's evil doings and ignoring or minimizing those of other countries, but this is also a consequence of his limited mandate. It is not that he hates America's government in particular: Chomsky is an anarchist; he hates *all* national governments. (He says often that the United States, for all its flaws, is still the freest country on earth.) He criticizes America because, as an American, he feels that he is culpable for its bad actions, and is in a position to affect them. He does not hold himself responsible for the world.



Getting seriously involved in politics was an unpleasant choice for Chomsky—he had a nice life, and he didn't want to give it up. In the mid-sixties, when he first became involved in the antiwar movement, it was not the mass phenomenon that it would become. He gave talks all the time, but to tiny groups, in churches, in people's living rooms. Then, when the movement began to get more attention, there were other problems. Chomsky didn't just speak against the war; for ten years, he refused to pay his taxes, and he supported draft dodgers; he was arrested several times and put on Nixon's official enemies list. "It was a big thing to make decisions that could land you in jail," he says. "Not that anyone was going to be tortured—it wasn't Turkey. But it's just a big decision when you've got a comfortable life and you're doing work you like and your family's growing up." At one point, when it looked as though he might spend several years in prison, he and Carol decided that she should go back to school and get a Ph.D., so she could support the family. (She wrote a dissertation on early-childhood language acquisition and started teaching at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.) Chomsky did not, in the end, have to leave his family to go to jail, but his activism had other consequences. "In the late sixties, there were a lot of personal ruptures, some of them pretty sharp," he says. "Things just got too tense. I mean, when the Vietnam War was heating up, if you were seriously involved in actions against it, you just couldn't talk to people who didn't agree with you, and they couldn't talk to you. I mean, these things engaged an awful lot of emotion and concern, even concern about your life. It was all-consuming."

Chomsky's involvement in the antiwar movement lost him some friends, but that was nothing compared with his position on Israel, especially after the Six-Day War, in 1967. "After '48, opposition to a Jewish state became a pretty marginal position in America, but it was only after '67 that it became a fighting issue," Chomsky says. "People who had had nothing to do with Zionism their whole lives all of a sudden became fanatic Zionists in '67. I think a lot of it had to do with domestic issues in the United States. My own relatives from the Communist Party became raving reactionaries. You could see just what was happening: they were being challenged by black people who regarded them as the oppressors."

When Chomsky and Carol were first married, they thought seriously about moving to Israel in order to join a kibbutz. To Chomsky, the kibbutzim were one of the few societies the world had known that put anarchist principles into practice: they were democratic and nonhierarchical and shared manual work in an equitable way. In 1953, Chomsky and Carol lived for a month's trial period in a left-leaning, Buberite kibbutz called Hazorea; Chomsky, who had no relevant skills, worked as an agricultural laborer. He found the kibbutz racist and ideologically stifling, but the reason that he and Carol ultimately decided not to emigrate was that he didn't want to work in a university and live with his family only on weekends.

After the Six-Day War, however, Chomsky grew disgusted with Israel. "The country changed enormously after 1967," he says. "Hundreds of thousands of illegal workers from Romania, Thailand, and they do all the dirty work. Most people don’t even see them—they’re hidden in the slums of Tel Aviv. And then there’s the occupied territories, which is another story. All that is extremely corrosive to the moral fibre of the country. I’ve been intimately involved with Israel since childhood, it’s a large part of my life, and there’s never been a period like this. After the Six-Day War, Yeshayahu Leibowitz, who was a professor at Hebrew University—a Talmudist, very highly respected, Orthodox Jew, and so on—warned right away: he said if we hold on to this occupation we’re going to turn into what he called Judeo-Nazis. Unfortunately, he was right. Israel is becoming more and more like South Africa.”

THE ONLY ANIMAL

The only animal that commits suicide
went for a walk in the park,
basked on a hard bench
in the first star,
travelled to the edge of space
in an armchair
while company quietly
talked, and abruptly
returned,
the room empty.

The only animal that cries,
that takes off its clothes
and reports to the mirror, the one
and only animal
that brushes its own teeth—

somewhere

the only animal that smokes a cigarette,
that lies down and flies backward in time,
that rises and walks to a book
and looks up a word
heard the telephone ringing
in the darkness downstairs and decided
to answer no more.

And I understand,
too well: how many times
have I made the decision to dwell
from now on
in the hour of my death
(the space I took up here

There are many people who feel that Chomsky has gone so far in his criticism of Israel that he must be anti-Semitic. This suspicion became widespread twenty-five years ago, in the course of an unpleasant interlude in Chomsky’s life known as the Faurisson affair. Robert Faurisson was a professor of French literature at the University of Lyon-2, in France, who had been suspended from his teaching duties after a mob of students protested his denials of the Holocaust. Faurisson’s publisher drew up a petition arguing that the university should protect his right to free speech; the petition, which called Faurisson a “respected” professor and referred to his statements on the Holocaust as “findings,” was published in several French newspapers and bore Chomsky’s name as one of its signers. Not surprisingly, the petition engendered considerable confusion and dismay among Chomsky’s supporters. How could he lend his name to such a cause? And why would right-wing anti-Semites think to call Chomsky in the first place? It turned out to be a case of, as Nathan Glazer puts it, “*les extrêmes se touchent.*” Faurisson’s publisher, La Vieille Taupe, had started out as a bookshop of the same name, which had been, during the Paris student revolts of 1968, an unofficial radical salon. Over the years, the Vieille Taupe group had become so extreme and so isolated that it had joined forces with Ogmios, another bookstore-cum-political movement, far to the French anti-Semitic, anti-foreign right. It was Serge Thion, an old leftist associated with La Vieille Taupe, who had thought to call Chomsky.

Some months after the petition appeared, Thion asked Chomsky to write a further public statement on the subject. Chomsky agreed, and wrote that in his opinion serious adherence to the principle of free speech meant granting it even to fascists and anti-Semites; but Faurisson was neither—he was, Chomsky suggested, bizarrely, “a relatively apolitical liberal.” He gave the statement to Thion and told him to do with it what he pleased; the publisher appended it as a preface to a book by Faurisson. Two months after Chomsky sent off the statement, he seemed to realize that he had done something very stupid. He saw that it might so seriously undermine his credibility even with the left that he might become politically sterilized. He asked the publisher to withdraw the statement, but it was too late: the book had already been published, with Chomsky’s name on the cover. Chomsky had indeed done something stupid. He was excoriated for calling Faurisson a liberal, for signing a petition that referred to Faurisson’s Holocaust denial as “findings,” and for endorsing a book that he had not read. Chomsky has since vainly pointed out that he did not feel the need to read “The Satanic Verses” before signing petitions in support of Salman Rushdie. Since Chomsky had not read Faurisson’s book, his statement could not logically be taken as an endorsement of its contents, but to his furious public that made no difference.

scarlessly closing like water)
and said I'm never coming back,
and yet

this morning
I stood once again
in this world, the garden
ark and vacant
tomb of what
I can't imagine,
between twin eternities,
some sort of wings,
more or less equidistantly
exiled from both,
hovering in the dreaming called
being awake, where
You gave me
in secret one thing
to perceive, the
tall blue starry
strangeness of being
here at all.

You gave us each in secret one thing to perceive.

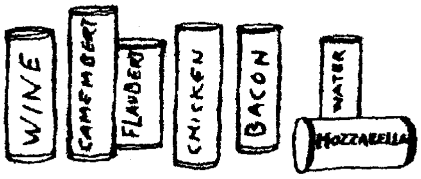
Furless now, upright, My banished
and experimental
child

You said, though your own heart condemn you

I do not condemn you.

—*Franz Wright*

Around the same time, Chomsky became preoccupied with the issue of America's supplying of weapons to Indonesia when the Indonesian government was killing thousands of people in East Timor. Very few people in America knew about the ongoing massacre, because it was barely written about in the press, so Chomsky took it upon himself to bring it to the public's attention, and he worked tirelessly toward this goal for several years. To Chomsky, the failure of coverage was due not merely to moral laziness, or to lack of interest in a small place far away; it was part of a long-standing pattern. In an influential book, "Manufacturing Consent," which he wrote with Edward Herman, Chomsky compared the continuous, furious press coverage of Pol Pot's massacres to the silence on Indonesia's. The press, he concluded, castigated American enemies while ignoring the misdeeds of American allies; it imagined itself to be independent and critical but actually functioned as a propaganda organ of the government. To many people, this sounded like a conspiracy theory, but Chomsky argued that conspiracy wasn't necessary: it was necessary merely to take seriously the fact that media are products in a market; saying that the press responds to the interests of its élite patrons is no more a conspiracy theory than saying that managers at General Motors respond to the interests of investors.



To read Chomsky's recent political writing at any length is to feel almost physically damaged. The effect is difficult to convey in a quotation because it is cumulative. The writing is a catalogue of crimes committed by America, terrible crimes, and many of them, but it is not they that produce the sensation of blows: it is Chomsky's rage as he describes them. His sentences slice and gash, envenomed by a vicious sarcasm. His rhythm is repetitive and monotonous, like the hacking of a machine. The writing is as ferocious as the actions it describes, but coldly so. It is not Chomsky's style to make death live, to prick his readers with lurid images. He uses certain words over and over, atrocity, murder, genocide, massacre, murder, massacre, genocide, atrocity, atrocity, massacre, murder, genocide, until, through repetition, the words lose their meaning and become technical. The sentences are accusations of guilt, but not from a position of innocence or hope for something better: Chomsky's sarcasm is the scowl of a fallen world, the sneer of Hell's veteran to its appalled naïfs.

To pick up Chomsky's first political book, "American Power and the New Mandarins," after reading his recent writing is a strange and moving experience. "American Power," published in 1967, contains some of Chomsky's earliest political writing, mostly about the Vietnam War, and here the tone is completely different. He is fierce in his criticism, but there is none of the corrosive sarcasm that is everywhere in his later work. He speaks of hope for the future; when he talks about America, he talks about "we." In the famous essay "The Responsibility of Intellectuals," he charges intellectuals with the noble duty of uncovering political falsehood. (These days, he says that intellectuals almost always bow to power.) "There is a new mood of questioning and rebellion among the youth of the country, a very healthy and hopeful development, by and large, that few would have predicted a decade ago," he writes. "These stirrings of concern and commitment give some reason to hope that we will not repeat the crimes of the recent past.”

It is not just in his political work that Chomsky is vicious in argument. “The thing about Noam that people don’t understand is that about linguistics he doesn’t have much sense of humor,” Morris Halle, a colleague of Chomsky’s since the fifties and one of his closest friends, says. “He takes it deathly seriously. And that causes problems. A woman linguist whom I know went in to see Noam and asked him some technical questions and somehow set him off. And he hit her this way and he hit her that way and on and on and you couldn’t stop him. She cried and she was terribly upset about it. Well, I went in afterward and he said, ‘She didn’t come here to have pleasant conversation, she came here for technical reasons.’ He didn’t think he was being unkind to her. He just doesn’t make small talk about linguistics.”

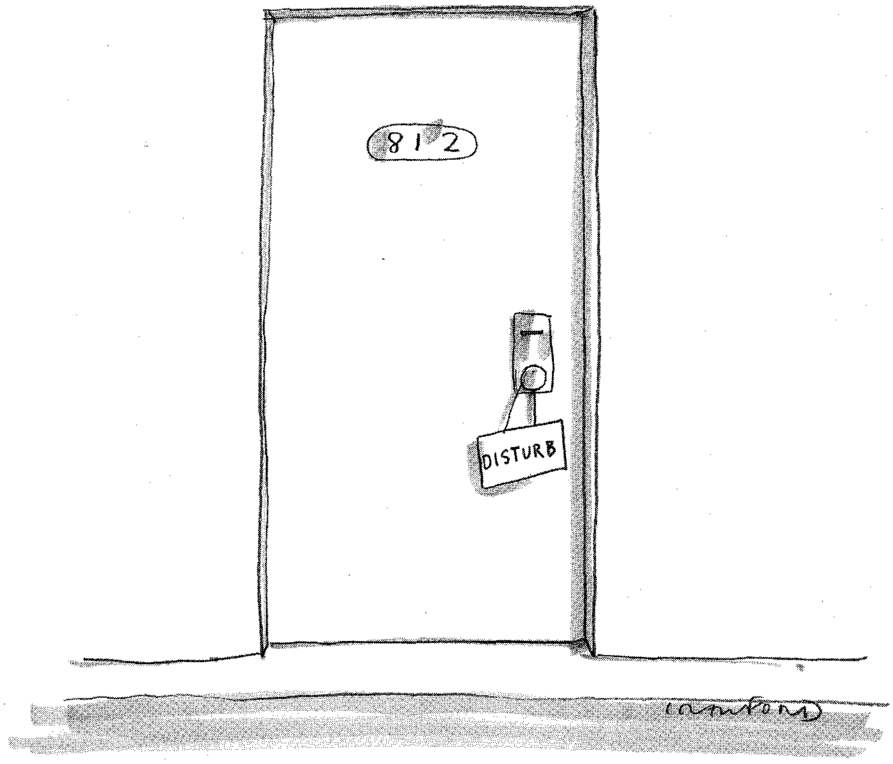
People often accuse Chomsky of setting himself up as a guru, of encouraging the cult that has grown up around him, but if he wanted to be a guru he would not work so consistently to alienate his followers. “There really is an alpha-male dominance psychology at work there,” a colleague says. “He has some of the primate dominance moves. The staring down. The withering tone of voice.” Revolutions, even some intellectual ones, are brutal, and carried out by brutal people. When Benjamin Jowett, a close friend of Florence Nightingale, was asked to describe her, he said, “Violent. Very violent.” Chomsky is an extraordinarily violent man.

Though he is a rhetorician of serpentine cunning, Chomsky chooses to believe that his debates consist only of facts and arguments, and that audiences evaluate these with the detachment of a computer. In his political work, he even makes the silly claim (the opposite of the sophisticated anti-empiricism he favors in linguistics) that he is presenting *only* facts—that he subscribes to no general theories of any sort. (His theories, of course, are in his tone—in the sarcasm that implies “This is only to be expected, given the way things are.”) This claim to rhetorical purity has for years infuriated Chomsky’s interlocutors, some of whom point out that his facts, gleaned from newspaper clippings, are not always accurate. “These are the facts, there are no others,” Christopher Hitchens says, mocking Chomsky’s claims to objectivity. “And if someone disagrees the objection is ‘Well, are you telling me you’re against the truth?’ As if empiricism of the crudest kind were the best that we can do. I mean, that’s very vulgar. And that’s the authoritarian personality.” When Chomsky says he is presenting only the facts, though, he really believes it. “I would not feel comfortable thinking that I was able to change people’s minds on a matter of human significance,” he says. “Who am I to change their minds? If I can give them facts, fine. But nobody should want to have that kind of authority, and if you have it you shouldn’t use it.”

Chomsky has fought many battles over the years, political and linguistic, but perhaps the most ferocious was the fight in the late sixties and early seventies that became known as the linguistics wars. The first task he had set for his new field after the destruction of Bloomfield was the construction of an English grammar. One of the core ideas he came up with was the notion of deep structure: a sentence that could be considered the root of other sentences, translated into them by means of various movements, or transformations. “John is easy to please” and “Is John easy to please?,” for instance, could both be analyzed as derivations of “For us to please John is easy”—a sentence in which subject, verb, and object were arranged in what is, in English, the most basic syntactic order. This allowed him to codify the relationship between active, passive, and interrogative versions of the same sentence. Chomsky was mostly content to focus on English, but by the mid-sixties a group of his students grew impatient: they wanted to get to universal grammar faster, and so they started studying other languages as well. Once polyglot data were brought into the picture, it seemed to them that there was simply too much syntactic variation in the world for a universal grammar to be based on syntax—it must, they thought, be based on something more general, like logic. In 1966, Chomsky went on sabbatical to Berkeley for a year, and, without his gravitational presence, this movement, which was later known as “generative semantics,” flourished.

The generative-semantics movement was led by four young linguists who called themselves “the four horsemen of the Apocalypse.” They were only a little younger than Chomsky, but they were from a different generation, the sixties counterculture. Chomsky called his theory, in alpha-male style, “the standard theory”; they gave their theories names like “Clyde,” and their sentences were convoluted and full of jokes—“The M.C. introduced Mick Jagger’s penis as being large enough to amaze the most jaded of groupies,” for example. One of

“Granted, we’re living longer—on the other hand, we’re out of it sooner.”



the four horsemen, James McCawley, wrote under the pseudonym Quang Phuc Dong, of the South Hanoi Institute of Technology, and they all had T-shirts made with "S.H.I.T." printed on them. The generative semanticists were also of a different intellectual bent—a different aesthetic. Chomsky was of a mathematical turn of mind and was interested in language as a formal system: thought, in the most abstract sense of the word. The generative semanticists came out of the humanities and were interested in actual human beings and the way they spoke.

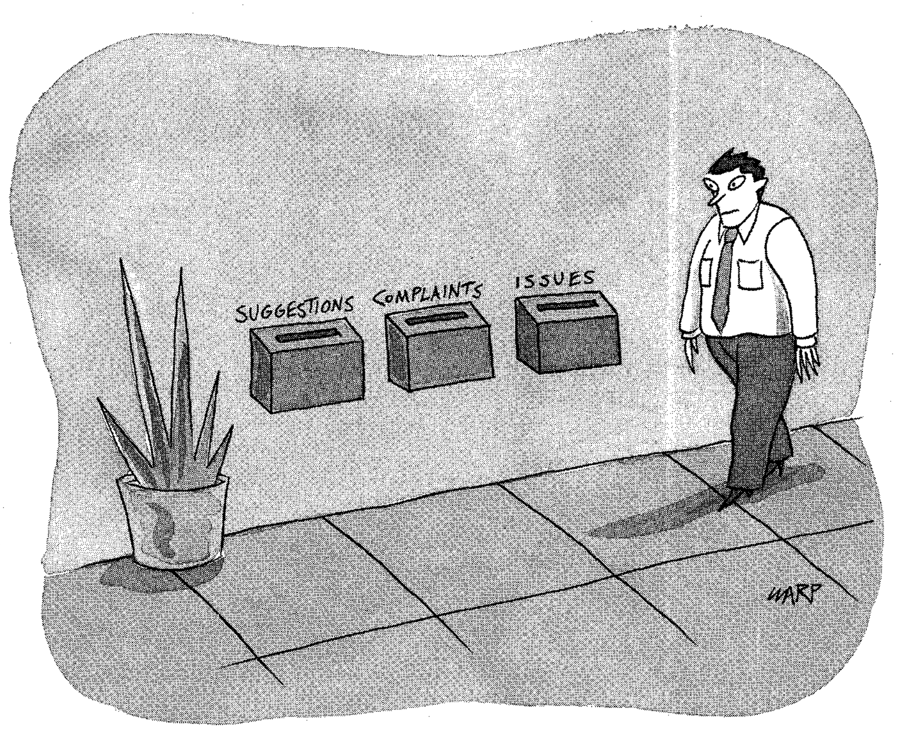
In laying the crucial groundwork for his revolution, Chomsky had distinguished what he called "performance" from what he called "competence." "Performance" was language as it was used every day: ephemeral sentences, made imperfect by slips of the tongue, lapses of attention, idiosyncratic mistakes, odd neighborhood locutions. "Competence," on the other hand, was the generic knowledge of a language possessed by a native speaker—the sentence forms that would be recognized intuitively by such a speaker as correct. Chomsky decreed that linguistics could ignore performance as "noise"—as idiosyncrasies irrelevant to a theorist of grammar, as cuts or bruises would be considered irrelevant by a biologist describing the structure of a leg. In fact, he believed, not only was everyday conversation irrelevant to the core of linguistic knowledge; communication in general was a relatively minor aspect of language. Language was most important as a tool for thinking, a means for structuring thought.

The generative semanticists felt that Chomsky's dismissal of communication was crazy. McCawley compared his competence-performance thesis to a theory of the stomach that ignored digestion. The generative semanticists, influenced by ordinary language philosophy, argued that sentences could not be understood outside a specific conversational context. A sentence like "Spiro conjectures Ex-Lax," for instance (to use one of their typical examples), seems like ungrammatical nonsense, except when understood as a response to the question "Does anyone know what Pat Nixon frosts her cakes with?" Chomsky had carefully erected methodological walls to keep his grammar pure, free from the messiness of the social, but the generative semanticists gleefully punched holes in the walls to let all the beautiful chaos flood back in.

In 1967, Chomsky came back from Berkeley and immediately went on the attack. The generative semanticists found the conflict very upsetting: Chomsky was their hero, and here he was, seemingly destroying their theory for the sake of it. He seemed to them to be fighting dirty, purposely misunderstanding their arguments. Chomsky, of course, denied that he was doing any such thing—he felt he was just correcting error, as usual. The situation was too emotional to be an ordinary academic disagreement, and soon it grew nasty. The generative semanticists had been trained in the fight against Bloomfield to wage theoretical war with as much cruelty as possible, and, if Chomsky had once been an angel to them, he now became Satan. Paul Postal, these days a professor at N.Y.U., still loathes Chomsky with an astonishing passion. "After many years, I came to the conclusion that everything he says is false," Postal says. "He will lie just for the fun of it. Every one of his arguments was tinged and coded with falseness and pretense. It was like playing chess with extra pieces. It was all fake." Finally, in the seventies, Chomsky stopped attacking generative semantics and began simply to ignore it. Most linguists at that point were persuaded of the generative-semantic position; not even all of the M.I.T. department was on Chomsky's side. (Indeed, even now, while Chomsky's general reputation is that of a brilliant linguist with dubious political ideas, a significant minority of linguists view him as a heroic political thinker with dubious linguistic ideas.) Yet, somehow, by the time Chomsky had developed his next model, several years later, nobody was doing generative semantics anymore. Once again, Chomsky had won.

In the past thirty years, Chomsky has staged two more linguistic revolutions, in each of which he repudiated much of what he had said before. These revolutions have a Maoist effect: Chomskyan doctrine never becomes entirely public, part of normal science, but stays rooted in the man himself. With every revolution, Chomsky loses some followers, but, for his adherents, the revolutions are exhilarating.

In early 1979, Chomsky spent several months in Italy, giving what came to be known as the Pisa lectures. During that time, he decided that traditional grammatical constructions, such as the passive, or relative clauses, which he had



spent the previous twenty years analyzing, were just conventional artifacts, and that the truly interesting properties of syntax cut across those boundaries. Since traditional constructions are different in different languages, removing them made linguists feel that they were suddenly much closer to the goal that Chomsky had declared twenty years before: the discovery of the universal principles that underlie all languages and are hardwired into the human brain.

In the fall of 1979, Chomsky returned to M.I.T., and huge numbers of people followed him. European linguistics departments were emptied of their generative grammarians. Linguists came from all over the world to talk to each other, to talk to Chomsky, to attend his famous Thursday-afternoon syntax seminars, to join the revolution. There was all sorts of brand-new, fantastically interesting work to do, and they wanted to be part of it. David Pesetsky, who is now a professor in Chomsky's department, was a graduate student at M.I.T. at the time. "It *felt* like a revolution," he says. "It was very exciting. Suddenly there were questions that you could ask that hadn't been asked before, and real answers to questions that people had been asking before. And to be a student here at the time was an incredible privilege. In a sense, it was a cheat. Because it was just very, very easy to say something interesting that no one had ever said before. You could be a celebrity!"

One of the major ideas that grew out of this revolution was the notion of parameters. In the course of perfecting his previous English grammar, Chomsky and his students had developed so many rules and sub-rules that the grammar had grown quite baroque. This was a problem, because the more complicated and English-specific the grammar grew, the more implausible it seemed that something like it could possibly be wired into children's brains at birth. Studying in Pisa with linguists whose first language was not English had made this problem seem even more urgent to Chomsky. He came up with a radical solution. Whereas before he had thought that the linguist's task was to derive a grammar whose rules worked for all languages, now he decided that the trick was to think of languages as differing from each other in a finite set of ways. What was wired into the brain was not a single universal grammar but something like a series of on-off switches: a setting of on-off-on-off would produce one language; a setting of off-off-on-off would produce another. One of the switches he came up with, for instance, was the choice between "head first" and "head last." A language is considered "head first" if the "head" of a phrase—the noun in a noun phrase, the adjective in an adjective phrase—comes first. So in a head-first language like English it is correct to say "I heard [[rumors] that you are leaving town]" (where "rumors" is the noun and "rumors that you are leaving town" is the noun phrase); but in a head-last language like Japanese it is correct to say "I [[that you are leaving town] rumors] heard." Chomsky suggested that after children are born the language they hear triggers their brain to set their mental switches in the way that is appropriate for their native tongue. Suddenly, the learning of language and the structure of the language organ looked much simpler and more elegant than they had before.

Last December, just before the holidays, Chomsky flew from Istanbul to Diyarbakir. Diyarbakir is a dilapidated, poor, muddy, overcrowded city in southeastern Turkey, on the banks of the Tigris, about sixty miles north of Turkey's border with Iraq. It is the center of Kurdish guerrilla resistance to the Turkish government, and is thought of, in certain circles, as the capital of an independent Kurdistan. Chomsky arrived at Diyarbakir's tiny airport on a freezing night, and was greeted, as he is greeted everywhere, by a crowd of cameras and microphones. In the dining room of his spartan, Soviet-style hotel, Diyarbakir was waiting to meet him. The mayor was there, along with a famous Armenian-language novelist, a Kurdish poet, and a crowd of Kurdish-rights activists.

Chomsky had been to Turkey once before, in February of last year, to attend the trial of his publisher. Aram, an Istanbul publishing house associated with the P.K.K., the Kurdish guerrilla resistance movement, had published a collection of Chomsky material, some of it downloaded from the Internet, in which Chomsky criticized the Turkish government's human-rights record and its policies toward the Kurds. Aram's editors knew that they were likely to be prosecuted for publishing the book—in fact, they had done so precisely in order to provoke prosecution, both for publicity and as an act of civil disobedience. Chomsky's presence in the courtroom made the trial an international event, and, perhaps because the government felt uncomfortable under this unexpected scrutiny, the charges were dismissed. Chomsky was treated like a rock star. Reporters, photographers, and TV cameramen camped outside his hotel in Istanbul for the three days and nights that he was there. When he visited Diyarbakir, he was greeted by a crowd of loudly ululating women.

Chomsky had come to Diyarbakir this time to speak at a human-rights conference. He was taken to a large, low-ceilinged, windowless room, lit by fluorescent lights. On either side of the stage, local activist groups had propped seven-foot-tall cardboard signs in the shape of giant lollipops, bearing their organizational banners and covered in bright-colored tissue paper.

"I'd like to say a few words about what lies immediately ahead, and what this may bring to the Kurdish populations of the Middle East," Chomsky said. "It's clear that the government of the United States, with Britain trailing along, is desperately seeking to go to war with Iraq, although the disparity of force is so vast that the term 'war' is hardly appropriate." As he spoke, a tiny orange kitten appeared and wandered out in front of the stage. It spotted the huge audience and froze, terrified. Several of the photographers snapped pictures of it. It ran back and forth frantically and then hid behind a curtain.

"Like most states in the world," Chomsky continued, unaware of the kitten, "Iraq is an artificial creation—it was patched together by the rulers of the world eighty years ago in order to satisfy two conditions: first, that Britain, not Turkey, would gain control of the huge oil reserves of the north, and, secondly, that the British dependency of Iraq would have no access to the sea and therefore would remain a dependency. When the United States took over global management from Britain sixty years ago, it kept the same arrangements in place." Another kitten ran out onto the stage, followed by the first one. The two curled up together and fell asleep.

Carol, sitting in the front row in a purple down coat, was also asleep, her chin resting on her chest. It had been a very long week. Just before he travelled to Diyarbakir, Chomsky had spent three days engaged in non-stop activity in London. He had then, after a twenty-four-hour stop in Geneva, spent seventy-two hours in Istanbul, during which time he opened a book fair by cutting a ribbon with the mayor, lectured at a symposium on peace and democracy, dined with trade-union activists, gave a linguistics seminar at Bosporus University, and received the first Turkish Publishers Union Peace Prize. Chomsky is now seventy-four, and all his travel is taking its toll on him.

"The trip was horrible," Carol said later. "I'm never going on another one. What am I going to do? Sit there and watch him kill himself?" She had accompanied him in an effort to make him slow down, but she had failed. "About ten years ago, Noam came home from a trip to India in a state of complete nervous exhaustion," she said. "He dragged himself into the doctor's office and the doctor said, 'You'll die. You can't do this. Clear your schedule for two weeks, stay in bed.' He had a whole regimen. Big meal in the afternoon, not at night, twenty minutes' soak in the tub, and he put him on Valium or something. And he said, 'You've got to do something different. You can't be at the mercy of your hosts.' We decided that I should be the policeman because he can't say no, someone else has to say no for him. But this trip he said, 'Turkey is different, don't get in my way. There's not going to be any sticking to the schedule because things are so awful and they need so much.'"

Carol shares her husband's views, and has been politically involved herself, but she dislikes the activist existence even more than he does. "My life has certainly not turned out the way I expected," she said. "To me, the interesting question is, if I were in the position of making the choice to marry now, would I choose him?" She went on, "That's a funny question. Who knows? I mean, it is very different from what I expected. Just in terms of the fame and notoriety, or whatever you call it. The intrusion of public life. The ridiculous clutching at him. The noblesse-oblige aspect—sometimes he says, 'I just have to take that call.' We've actually got it now so that the phone almost never rings, except when it rings at 3 A.M. from some party where kids are having an Ecstasy rave or who knows what." Asked if she regretted any of the decisions she had made in her life, she paused for a long time. "Well, you roll with the punches," she said at last. "He leaves me alone about things, so that makes it very easy. He can do his thing, I do mine."

"It's reasonably clear that the official reasons for the war cannot be taken seriously," Chomsky went on. "The Bush Administration is carrying out a serious assault against the general population"—he meant its domestic policies. "They have to prevent people from paying attention, and the only way anyone has ever figured out how to do that is to terrify them with tales of monsters who are about to destroy us."

As nearly always happens at a Chomsky talk, the unrelieved gloom of the lecture was followed by questions begging for suggestions and hope. Chomsky complied, with the few sentences he reserves for such moments. "The peace movements have expanded enormously in the past thirty or forty years," he said. "And the global-justice movements are also something completely new. It's the first time ever that there has been something that looks like a true international—the dream of the workers' movement and the left since their modern origins." Carol watched him deliver these thoughts with tired bemusement. "An early question in every Q.&A. is 'You've told us everything that's wrong but not what we can do about it,'" she said later. "And they're right. He hasn't. So he gives what to me is a fake answer: 'You've got to organize, because a lot of people think these things but they're isolated from each other.' He's doing it because people walk out too depressed. He's responding to people saying, 'Just give us something to hang on to.'"

After the lecture, many people hurried up to the stage. An old woman in a head scarf asked Chomsky to help her find her sons, who had been picked up by the Army, and he told her there was nothing he could do. After a short while, Carol gestured to the organizers, Chomsky was guided through the crowd out of the hall, and the owners of the giant lollipops stepped forward to take them away. ♦

LETTER FROM IRAQ

THE BOMBING OF BAGHDAD

The view from the banks of the Tigris.

BY JON LEE ANDERSON

The morning the first cruise missiles hit Baghdad, on March 20th, I was in a suite at the Al Rashid Hotel, in a room facing south, which provided good reception for satellite phones and a panoramic view of some primary targets: the telecommunications tower; several grand domed palaces; and the headquarters of the Mukhabarat, the secret police. I was awake around five-thirty and heard a big, muted *whoomping* noise. Then my bed moved, as if there had been an earthquake rather far away. I thought I heard a high-flying jet go past, followed by anti-aircraft fire and air-raid sirens. There was more firing and, as a light-blue dawn broke, silence, except for the sound of a rooster crowing, birds singing, and a muezzin calling out "*Allahu akbar*" over and over. Not long afterward, Paul McGeough, the correspondent for the Sydney *Morning Herald*, who was staying in the next room, received a phone message from his office saying that we had to move out of the Al Rashid because it was "a high-value target."

There had been rumors all week that the Al Rashid would be hit, perhaps because, it was said, there was a secret

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Presidential bunker under it, or because a tunnel linked it to Saddam Hussein's main palace complex across the street, or simply because it was in the way of missiles headed for the palaces or key office buildings nearby. Journalists had been hedging their bets about where to stay once the bombing started, booking rooms in several hotels and moving back and forth. The night before the missile attack, McGeough and I shared a dirty little room with two single beds in the Palestine Hotel, a run-down place that was built in the nineteen-eighties, during the Iran-Iraq War, on the other side of the Tigris River. The Palestine was popular because it overlooks the palace complex but isn't uncomfortably close to it. We were able to get a room when a Canadian news organization ordered its reporter to get out of the country and he gave us his keys, but we were so miserable there that we moved back to the Al Rashid, where the gardeners were still watering the lawn and clipping the shrubs, and where enough of our colleagues were staying that we felt the safety of good company, if not numbers.

I had hoped to stay in my favorite hotel in Baghdad, the Al Safeer, a small, family-run place on Abu Nawas Street, on the same side of the river as the Palestine. I stashed food and water and other emergency supplies—candles, matches, batteries—there and visited several times in the days leading up to the war. The Al Safeer is near some open-air fish restaurants, which, in normal times, are brightly lit and jovial, with Middle Eastern music blaring from speakers on the walls. Many of the houses in the neighborhood are dilapidated mansions, with wrought-iron balconies and arched windows and doors. Farther down Abu Nawas from the Al Safeer there are several art galleries, a theatre, and a café where men sit outside and play dominoes. Narrow lanes run from Abu Nawas to Sadoun Street, a boulevard lined with watch shops and kebab restaurants and

A government building burning in downtown Baghdad on the night of March 21, 2003. Photograph by Olivier Jobard.

movie houses. The week before President Bush announced that President Hussein had forty-eight hours to get out of town, the movies running on Sadoun Street included "American Pie," a teen-sex film, and "Inner Sanctum," a thriller that, judging from the garish illustrations on the billboard advertising it, must be pretty gruesome.

My driver, Sabah, would often take me for a haircut and a shave on one of the back streets near the Al Safeer, at a small barbershop owned by a man named Karim, who has been cutting Sabah's hair for thirty years. Karim served us sweet black tea, in little glass cups and saucers, from the *chaikhana*, the teahouse, just across the street. Sometimes, late in the evening, we would smoke apple-flavored tobacco in a *nargileh*—a water pipe—at another teahouse nearby, which is owned by an Egyptian who came to Iraq years ago, when it was a wealthy country and immigrant workers flooded in from all over the Middle East. Many immigrants from those days, including quite a few Sudanese, still live in the neighborhood. The streets are dirty now, with uncollected garbage and rubble lying about, but it is my favorite part of Baghdad.

The Al Fanar, another small hotel on Abu Nawas Street, right next to the Palestine and a half mile or so from the Al Safeer, was filled by a cosmopolitan group of people who had come to Baghdad to show their solidarity with the Iraqis and to protest the war. One of them, an Irish-American in his early fifties named Patrick Dillon, insisted that I accept his copy of Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" as a gift. Dillon is a distinctive figure. He is very pale and he always wears black clothing. His head is shaved, and there is a tattoo of the crosshairs of a rifle on the back of his skull. He told me that he came to Baghdad to make a movie inspired by "Le Petit Soldat," Jean Luc Godard's second film, which was made in 1960, during the last years of the Algerian war for independence from France. The narrator of Godard's film is a deserter from the French Army who works for a right-wing terrorist organization (more or less the O.A.S.), and who has come to Geneva to assassinate an important commentator for the Arab side of things. The movie is full of moral and narrative ambiguities, and has some nasty scenes of torture. Dillon said that he had served as a soldier in Vietnam and had been obsessed with war and killing ever since. He said that he had also spent time in Northern Ireland, Somalia, and Kosovo, sometimes as a filmmaker and sometimes as a relief worker. "I love death," he said to me, enthusiastically. "I know it's wrong, but I do. Don't you? Isn't that why you're here?"

Before Dillon left me his copy of "Heart of Darkness," he read aloud the passage from which the title is derived: "The reaches opened before us and closed behind, as if the forest had stepped leisurely across the water to bar the way for our return. We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness. It was very quiet there." His voice was reverent, and he repeated the passage, then turned to me: "Doesn't that just fucking say it all? The heart of darkness. That's where we are, right here, right now, in fucking Baghdad." Later, I found a note that he had left in the book for me. "I've been shooting my eyeballs out, the underworld of sewage streets and feral packs of night children who remind me of me," he wrote, "and always on the verge of tears because of what Curtis 'Bombs Away' LeMay invented in Japan, evolved in the valleys of N. Korea and perfected in Vietnam, the firebomb, which is about to erase whatever is left of Iraqi life as it was known and lived and celebrated for what, four or five thousand years? But what's one or two or a hundred cultures or ethnicities tossed into the dustbin of history, among friends, right? . . . I've moved my bed away from the balcony sliding doors and taped the great panes of glass in cross-shaped patterns but I'll be damned if I can find any earplugs. What kind of a dump is this, hey?" I liked Dillon, but I worried about him. I saw him quite often as I drove around the streets near the Al Fanar. He would be striding purposefully along the sidewalk, and he was always alone.

The prelude to the war in Iraq attracted many eccentrics to Baghdad, among them a Russian photojournalist who wore a green paratrooper's outfit and a tall, blond human shield named Gordon Sloan, who was famous for having participated in the Australian version of "Big Brother." He had been filmed naked in the shower, and was subsequently known as Donkey Boy. Another human shield, Godfrey Meynell, a retired British civil servant, wept often and recited Kipling and Gerard Manley Hopkins. Korean feminists and Green Party activists mingled with more well-known visitors. Ramsey Clark, Dan Rather, Yevgeny Primakov, and Alexandra Vodjanikova, the current Miss Germany, all passed through the lobby of the Al Rashid, where the famous floor mosaic of the first George Bush had been carpeted over (because, it was said, Hans Blix did not want to be photographed stepping on it). Alexandra Vodjanikova hoped to discuss peace with Saddam Hussein, and although she did not get this opportunity, she was invited to dinner by Saddam's priapic and psychotic elder son, Uday. It is not known how their evening went, because the next morning Miss Germany left the country with nary a word to the press corps.

A few days after Patrick Dillon gave me his copy of "Heart of Darkness," he said that he was rereading Orwell's "1984," another of his favorite books. He was very excited about the imminent war, he said, and had found some wonderful subjects for his film: a group of child violinists who were learning to play Sibelius, and an Iraqi man who had returned from London, where he had been living for thirty years, and taken on the Sisyphean task of restoring a boat owned by his father. The boat had sunk in the Tigris during the bombing of Baghdad by the Americans in 1991. The man had raised it from the depths and was painstakingly working on it. "The trick to the film is to come back after the bombing, and see which of them has survived," Dillon said. "That's the story. Will any of us survive? Will you survive? Have you thought about that?" He laughed.

As war approached, most Iraqis I met seemed to be oddly neutral about the prospect. They were concerned about their families, but were not visibly hostile toward the West, or toward Americans. I had the impression that there was widespread, if privately held, support for regime change. I had a number of unmonitored conversations with Baghdadis, and several spoke to me with a candor that would

"Nothing's wrong—it's a managerial technique I learned from my mother."

have been unthinkable just a few weeks earlier. One day, as I was standing near the Tigris River with an Iraqi man, he said, "If God wills, Bush will bomb Saddam into the river. But not the people. Just Saddam. And Tikrit." Tikrit is Saddam's home town, and most of his close associates are from there. "If God wills, Tikrit will be flattened," the man said. He spat, and called Tikritis "camels' offspring" and a series of other pithy epithets in Arabic.

I was invited to dinner one night at the home of a senior government official, a man I will call Firas. There were a few other guests—educated, well-to-do Iraqi men who were friends of his. I told Firas that I hoped to stay in Baghdad during the war, and he said he thought that the rumors about the Al Rashid being a target were credible. He said he assumed that his ministry would be bombed, but he didn't say that this was a terrible thing, or that the Americans were embarking on a criminal enterprise by going to war with his government.

Firas grilled Gulf shrimp on a portable charcoal grill in the kitchen, and his guests sat in the living room drinking Lebanese arrack and eating warm pistachios, cashews, and almonds. Whenever Firas joined us, he would pick up the remote control of the TV and flip channels, following the news on CNN, Iraqi state TV, and Al Jazeera. Then he got interested in "My Best Friend's Wedding," which was playing on a satellite movie channel. He laughed delightedly at the scene where Cameron Diaz sings badly in a karaoke bar. Throughout the evening, Firas was interrupted by phone calls, including one from his boss, who wanted to talk about the eleventh-hour invitation to Hans Blix and Mohamed ElBaradei to return to Baghdad to discuss Iraq's offer of "accelerated coöperation" on the issue of disarmament. When he got off the phone, Firas turned to me and shrugged, as if to say he knew that it was already too late to stop the war, but he had his official duties to perform. "What else can we do?" he said.

As we ate the shrimp, Firas began flipping channels again, and found another movie, "Six Days, Seven Nights," starring Harrison Ford and Anne Heche as two mismatched people who crash-land on a deserted South Sea island. The movie was subtitled in Arabic, and Firas kept the sound turned down, but it was pretty easy to follow. Ford and Heche feuded and fought and then, predictably, fell in love. Firas and his Iraqi guests were transfixed. I said that it seemed a little strange to be sitting here in Baghdad watching a Hollywood film a few days before the American attack, and they nodded vigorously and laughed, then turned back to the television set.

The day after Bush set the deadline for Saddam to leave, I visited the home of Sameer, an Iraqi violinist. Sameer and his wife and children live in a modest but comfortable house in a residential section of Baghdad. Sameer leads a chamber-music group, but he earns his living as a violin teacher at a Baghdad music school for children. He has taught three of his four childen to play instruments, and he wanted to show me what they could do. The children were excited. They squeezed together on the couch in the sitting room, whispering and fidgeting. Large wooden bureaus had been placed in front of the windows, and the furniture was covered with drop cloths. Sameer went first. He stood in front of a music stand and played a sweet, mournful étude. Then Hamid, his ten-year-old son, played his own little violin while his father stood next to him, gently directing him with his hand. One of Sameer's daughters played a piece for flute, and his eldest child, a twelve-year-old girl, played the piano. Sameer apologized about the piano being out of tune. He said that the violin strings were not in the best shape, either. They were second-rate strings from Turkey and China. "It's impossible to get professional violin strings in Baghdad," he said sadly.

During the family concert, Sameer's wife, a pretty woman with deep-blue eyes, had stayed in the kitchen, and I went in to say hello. She was sitting at a table making small face masks with a needle and thread. She put cotton balls and charcoal inside a gauze pouch that would cover the mouth and nose, and little loops of cloth to fasten the masks around the ears. I asked her what they were for, and she smiled shyly. "They are masks, for the smoke, for the children," she said. I asked her if the children knew what was about to happen. She shook her head. "No, they don't, really. They just know there will be a lot of noise and smoke." The children had come into the room and were standing around, smiling and staring timidly at me.

Later, in the bunkerlike front room and out of earshot of the children, I asked Sameer what his plans were. He wanted to take his family out before the bombing began, to Jordan, he said. He had the right papers to leave, but he had so far been unable to get enough gas for the journey. He didn't know yet if he would manage it in time; there were huge lines at all the gas stations in town. But he was going to try. He nodded toward his children. "I don't want them to go through this," he said. I asked if he needed any help. He looked embarrassed and shook his head, thanking me for the offer. When I drove away, the whole family was standing outside, and the children were smiling and waving.

Iraqis who had homes in the countryside or relatives in villages outside of Baghdad were fleeing the city. An Iraqi friend of mine who lives in a Shia neighborhood in the western suburbs was staying, but he told me that his three closest neighbors had locked up their houses and gone to Karbala, two hours to the south. They had asked him to look after their houses while they were away. Western journalists also began evacuating, leaving in a succession of convoys of GMC Suburbans headed for the Jordanian border. The normal fare for the ten-hour journey to Amman, two hundred dollars, had leaped to five hundred by noon of the day after Bush's speech. By that afternoon, it was seven hundred. Most of the reporters had been ordered out of the country by their news organizations, following Colin Powell's warning that all Westerners in Iraq were at risk. Some people had become nervous after receiving warnings from Iraqi Information Ministry officials that they could not guarantee their safety—a possible allusion to their being taken hostage by Saddam's intelligence services.

The last diplomats and U.N. inspectors in Baghdad were expected to leave the next morning, and the atmosphere in the hotels and at the Information Ministry became increasingly tense. Journalists had to pay their bills before they left the country. Fees to the government usually amounted to two hundred dollars plus fifty thousand Iraqi dinars—equivalent to another twenty dollars—per day. One American television network left behind three huge flour sacks full of dinars at the cashier's desk at the Al Rashid, a hotel employee told me in an awed voice. Until recently, the largest Iraqi notes in circulation were two-hundred-and-fifty-dinar notes, worth about ten cents; a few weeks ago, mercifully, ten-thousand-dinar notes began appearing. Paying off the press center was an immensely frustrating process that sometimes took several hours. There was a single cashier there, who was required to note the serial number of each U.S. bill. Once that tedious procedure was over, various officials had to be found to sign off on things.

The Al Rashid began emptying out. The day before, thinking of moving myself, I had revisited the Al Safeer to see how I felt about being there, and realized that it was probably not a good option after all. There were virtually no other journalists staying there, and I could easily be isolated and cut off from information when the war began. It was a moot point anyway, I discovered, as the managers let it be known that they had been told not to rent rooms to journalists. On Tuesday morning, Paul McGeough and I moved to the Palestine, and back to the Rashid the next day. By then, Baghdad had become an eerie place. There were few civilians on the streets, and most of the shops were shuttered, their windows taped with large X's. The traffic on the roads had thinned out considerably, and quite a few vehicles were filled with men in uniform, going here and there in a hurry. Policemen wearing old-fashioned helmets stood at intersections with their weapons, and throughout the city knots of militiamen and soldiers had assembled on street corners. Most of the foxholes and sandbagged dugouts that had begun appearing throughout the capital in the past four or five days, and had sat empty, were now manned by men with guns.

By Wednesday afternoon, there were few foreigners remaining in Iraq. The night before, the price of a car journey to Amman had reached thirteen hundred dollars, and reports had begun to filter back about journalists—mostly Americans and British, but also some Spaniards and at least one Norwegian relief worker—who had run into problems with the authorities while trying to leave the country. Most, it seemed, had been strip-searched, and detained on previously unenforced currency violations. Either they had been brought back to Baghdad or, depending on the rumors one heard, they were being held in detention in the city of Ramadi, west of Baghdad.

The prospect of being stuck in an Iraqi jail during an American bombing campaign seemed to rule out the option of leaving, and by late afternoon on Wednesday the lobby of the Al Rashid, which had had a funereal appearance just twenty-four hours before, when all the journalists headed over to the unpleasant Palestine, was once again thrumming with activity. At around 5 P.M., the men who run the Internet Center on the ground floor informed their customers that they would be closing earlier than usual, in two hours' time. As customers finished at the computers, the men turned them off, unplugged them, and began packing them away into cardboard boxes. Out in the lobby, I noticed that all the floor-to-ceiling windows that look onto the garden had been taped, and in the outer foyer, opposite the kilim shop, the windows were not only taped but covered with beautifully woven rugs. It felt as though you were walking through a luxurious Bedouin tent.

I went for a drive at dusk, through almost empty streets. Here and there, families were loading refrigerators, butane cannisters, and other belongings onto small flatbed trucks. While we were stopped at a traffic light, a man in the car next to us, a rustic-looking character in a red-and-white checked kaffiyeh head scarf, pointed a Kalashnikov out the window and began loading the clip. I heard a metallic-sounding click, and the man put the gun away as the light changed. People were stopping their cars to buy items from men and women who stood beside stands with little mounds of stacked-up wares—kerosene lamps, cans of infant formula, instant coffee, luncheon meat, jugs of soybean oil with the logo of the World Food Programme. Two young men at one of the stands looked at me in surprise and pointed at the sky. One of them asked in broken English if I was staying in Iraq for the war. I shrugged and nodded, and he smiled and said that he hoped I didn't get killed. We shook hands. I told him that I hoped he didn't get killed, either.

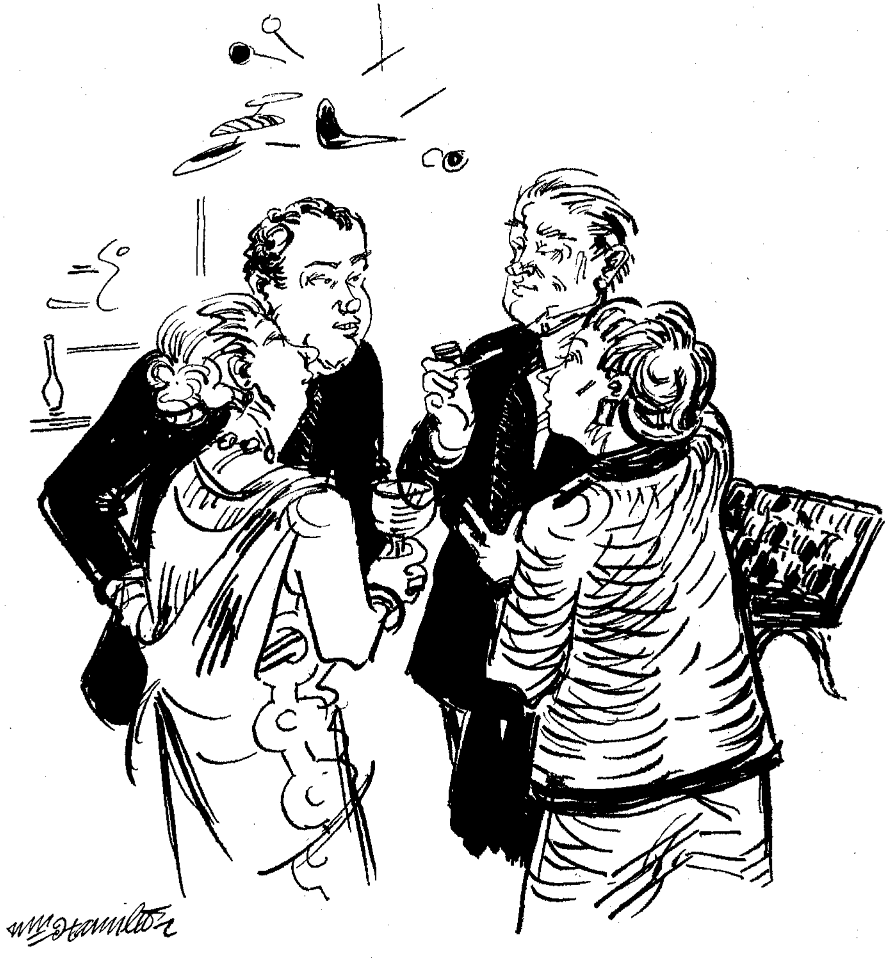
After the "decapitation" strike against Saddam early on Thursday morning, Paul McGeough and I moved back to the Palestine for good. The lobby was swarming with secret police, journalists, and some pretty eccentric-looking human shields, including one with long dreadlocks and pierced ears who wore black Kurdish pantaloons with a saggy rear end. In a new traffic island behind the hotel, next to a big statue of Saddam, one of the Korean feminist groups had hung a banner protesting sexual abuse.

The second strike came on Thursday evening, and when I looked out my window I noticed that several Iraqis were sitting on lawn chairs on the sidewalk in front of the entrance to a small hotel nearby, as if nothing much were happening and they were just enjoying the fresh evening air. There were three big hits quite close to us, but across the river, and we watched the fires from our balcony. We could see a few cars driving around, even over the bridges. Dogs barked, and the river looked as calm as olive oil, with just a shimmer of motion on the surface.

The next morning, I visited the home of a highly placed Iraqi professional, a man I will call Mr. Hassan, who began reminiscing about the sixties, when many Iraqis of his generation went to England and the United States to study. He had been a student at a provincial English university. It was one of the best times of his life, he said. Something had happened then, a simple thing, that was one of his most enduring memories, and he had been thinking of it that morning. He had travelled to London one day, to the Iraqi Embassy in Queen's Gate, to get a paper signed. "There was a porter who worked there, a man who had been at the Embassy forever," Mr. Hassan said. "He was a big, tall fellow, and English, but he had lived in Iraq and had been with the Embassy so long that he seemed completely Iraqi. I told him who I wanted to see and he told me to sit down and wait. After a long time, more than an hour and a half, I asked him why it was taking so long. He said that the person I was waiting for had gone out and that I should come back the next day. This made me very angry, of course. I had waited two hours, I said. The porter looked at his watch and told me I was lying. I had waited only an hour and a half.

"There was no point in arguing with the man," Mr. Hassan said. "But I was so furious that I told him I wouldn't leave. The porter stared at me for a moment and took a painting of the then President of Iraq, Abdul Salam Arif, down from the wall and brought it over to me. The frame was very loosely attached. He shoved the painting under my nose. 'Look,' he said, and he lifted the portrait up. Underneath was the picture of the President's predecessor, Abdul Karim Qasim. And there were other layers of portraits. I think the last one he showed me was of King Faisal." Mr. Hassan is something of a philosopher. "I think the porter was trying to tell me that Iraq's leaders came and went and it didn't matter to him, because he was *always* there. And as for me, I was of no consequence at all." Mr. Hassan smiled and arched his eyebrows.

That night, the "shock and awe" bombardment began. The first bombs hit precisely at nine o'clock, and we had a front-row view of the conflagration. There were huge blasts, simultaneous concussions with aftershocks that knocked us back. I forgot to put my earplugs in. The Republican Palace and a huge, ugly, pyramid-shaped building some ten stories high were hit several times and burned robustly. Fireballs were followed by white flashes that lit up the sky. Debris flew through the air from a couple of the blasts as buildings took direct hits. What must have been a cruise missile smashed into the roof of the Council of Ministers, and a huge orange plume of flame rose up. A big white dog loped down the center of Abu Nawas Street, followed, some minutes later, by a man on a bicycle, pedalling along in no apparent hurry. I heard a donkey bray. The night sky, which was a deep blue, was filled with columns of black and gray smoke. The Al Rashid was still standing. ♦

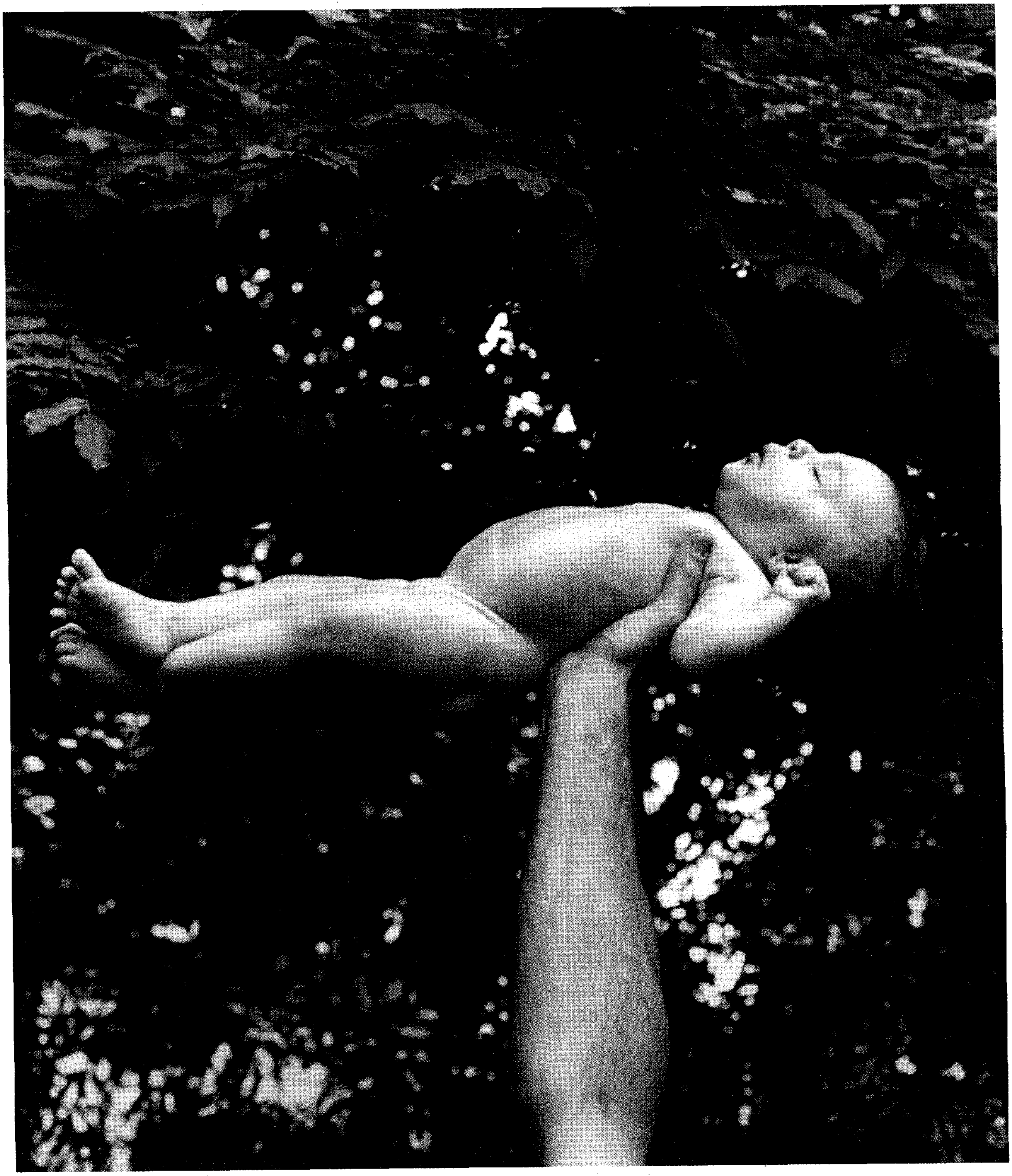


"Jim is a good old-fashioned modernist."

FICTION

WHEN I WOKE UP THIS MORNING, EVERYTHING I HAD WAS GONE

BY T. CORAGHESSAN BOYLE



The man I want to tell you about, the one I met at the bar at Jimmy's Steak House, was on a tear. Hardly surprising, since this was a bar, after all, and what do people do at bars except drink, and one drink leads to another—and if you're in a certain frame of mind, I suppose, you don't stop for a day or two, or maybe more. But this man—he was in his forties, tall, no fat on him, dressed in a pair of stained Dockers and a navy-blue sweatshirt cut off raggedly at the elbows—seemed to have been going at it steadily for weeks, months even.

It was a Saturday night, rain sizzling in the streets and steaming the windows, the dinner crowd beginning to rouse itself over decaf, cheesecake, and V.S.O.P., and the regulars drifting in to look the women over and wait for the band to set up in the corner. I was new in town. I had no date, no wife, no friends. I was on something of a tear myself—a mini-tear, I guess you'd call it. The night before, I'd gone out with one of my co-workers, who, like me, was recently divorced, and we'd had dinner, gone to a couple of places afterward. But nothing came of it—she didn't like me, and I could see that before we were halfway through dinner. I wasn't her type, whatever that might have been, and I started feeling sorry for myself, I guess, and drank too much. When I got up in the morning, I made myself a Bloody Mary, with a can of Snap-E-Tom, a teaspoon of horseradish, and two jiggers of vodka, just to clear my head, then went out to breakfast at a place by the water and drank a glass or two of Chardonnay with my frittata and homemade duck sausage with fennel, and then I wandered over to a sports bar and then another place after that, and I never did any of the errands I'd been putting off all week—and I didn't have any lunch, either. Or dinner. And so I drifted into Jimmy's and there he was, the man in the sweatshirt, on his tear.

There was a space around him at the bar. He was standing, the stool shoved back and away from him as if he had no use for comfort, and his lips were moving, though nobody I could see was talking to him. A flashlight, a notebook, and a cigarette lighter were laid out in front of him on the mahogany bar, and, though Jimmy's specialized in margaritas—there were eighteen different types of margaritas offered on the drinks menu—this man was apparently going the direct route. Half a glass of beer sat on the counter just south of the flashlight, and he was guarding three empty shot glasses as if he were afraid someone was going to run off with them. The bar was filling up. There were only two seats available in the place, one on either side of him. I was feeling a little washed out, my legs gone heavy on me all of a sudden, and I was thinking I might get a burger or a steak and fries at the bar. I studied him a moment, considered, then took the seat to his right and ordered a drink.

Our first communication came half a second later. He tapped my arm, gave me a long, tunnelled look, and made the universal two-fingered gesture for a smoke. Normally this would have irritated me—the law says you can no longer smoke in a public place in this state, and in any case I don't smoke and never have—but I was on a tear myself, I guess, and just gave him a smile and shrugged my shoulders. He turned away from me then, to flag down the bartender and order another shot—he was drinking Herradura Gold—and a beer chaser. There was a ritualistic moment during which he took a bite from the wedge of lime the bartender provided, sprinkled salt onto the webbing between the thumb and index finger of his left hand, licked it off, and threw back the shot, after which the beer came into play. He exhaled deeply, and then his eyes migrated back to me. "Nice to see you," he said, as if we'd known each other for years.

I said it was nice to see him, too. The gabble of voices around us seemed to go up a notch. A woman at the end of the bar began to laugh with a thick, dredging sound.

He leaned in confidentially. "You know," he said, "people drink for a lot of reasons. You know why I drink? Because I like the taste of it. Sweet and simple. I like the taste."

I told him I liked the taste of it, too, and then he made a fist and cuffed me lightly on the meat of the arm. "You're all right—you know that?" He held out his hand as if we'd just closed a deal, and I took it. I've been in business for years—for all but one of the years since I left college—and it was just a reflex to give him my name. He didn't say anything in response, just stared into my eyes, grinning, until I said, "And what do I call you?"

The man looked past me, his eyes groping toward the red-and-green neon sign with neatly bunched palm trees that glowed behind the bar and apprised everyone of the name of the establishment. It took him a minute, but then he dropped my hand and said, "Just call me Jimmy."

After a couple of drinks at a bar, after the subjects of sports, movies, and TV have been exhausted, people tend to talk about liquor, about the people they know who drink too much, fly off the handle, and wind up wrecking their lives and the lives of everyone around them, and then they tend to get specific. This man—Jimmy—was no different. Alcoholism ran in his family, he told me. His father had died in the streets when he was younger than Jimmy was now, a transient, a bum, useless to the world and, more emphatically, to his wife and children. And Jimmy himself had a problem. He admitted as much.

A year before, he'd been living on the East Coast, in a town up the Hudson River, just outside New York. He taught history at the local high school, and he'd come to it late, after working a high-stress job in Manhattan and commuting for years. History was his passion, and he hadn't had time to stagnate in the job like so many of his fellow-teachers, who went through the motions as if they were the walking dead. He loved sports, too. He was a jogger, a tennis player, and a mountain biker, and he coached lacrosse in the fall and baseball in the spring. He was married to a girl he'd met in his senior year at the state university in Albany. They'd had a son—"Call him Chris," he said, looking to the neon sign again—and he'd coached Chris in high school, then watched him go on to college himself as a newly minted freshman at an Ivy League school.

That was all right. Everything was all right. The school year began, and Jimmy dug out his notes, xeroxed study guides, looked up and down the class register and saw whom he could trust and whom he'd have to watch. In the mornings, before it was light, he ate breakfast alone in the kitchen, listen-

LAURENCE SALZMANN, "HAN AT AGE ONE" (1980)

ing to the soft hum of the classic-rock station, the hits that took him back, hits he hadn't heard in years, because Chris had always had the radio tuned to hip-hop or the alternative station. Above him, in the master bedroom, Caroline was enjoying the luxury of sleeping late after thirteen years of scrambling eggs and buttering toast and seeing her son off to school. It was still dark when Jimmy climbed into his car, and most mornings he was the first one in the building, striding down the wide polished halls in a silence that could have choked on itself.

Fall settled in early that year, a succession of damp glistening days that took the leaves off the trees and fed on the breath of the wind. It seemed to do nothing but rain, day after day. The sky never swelled to flex its glory; the sun never shone. He saw a photo in the paper of a bare-chested jogger on the beach in Key Biscayne and felt reality slipping away from him. One afternoon, he was out on the field behind the school—the lacrosse team was scrimmaging with a bigger, more talented squad from a prep school upstate—and he suddenly couldn't focus on the game. The assistant coach, no more than three or four years out of school himself, stepped up and took over the hectoring and the shoulder-patting, managed the stream of substitutions, and curbed the erupting tempers—discipline, that's what Jimmy taught above all else, because in a contact sport the team that controls its emotions will win every time—while the clock ticked off the minutes to the half and the rain whitened to sleet.

The sticks flashed, the players hurtled past him, grunting and cursing. He stood there in the weather, a physical presence, chilled, his hair wet, yet he wasn't there at all. He was reliving an episode from the previous year, when his son had been the star player on the team, a moment like this one—the field slick, the players' legs a patchwork of mud, stippled flesh, and dark blooming contusions. Chris had the ball. Two defenders converged on him, and Jimmy—the coach, the father—could see it all coming, the collision that would break open the day, bone to bone, the concussion, the shattered femur, the injury to the spinal cord, to the brain. The sound of it—the sick wet explosion—froze him so that he couldn't even go to his son, couldn't move. But then, a miracle, Chris pushed himself up from the icy turf, stiff as a rake, and began to walk it off.

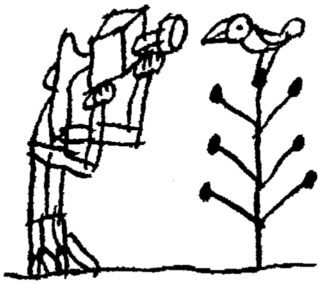
Jimmy awoke to the fact that someone was tugging at his arm. "Coach," somebody was saying—it was Mary-Louise, the principal's secretary, and what was she doing out here in this weather, the sleet caught like dander in the drift of her hairdo, which must have cost sixty-five dollars to streak and color and set? "Jimmy," she said. "You need to call your wife." Her face fell, the white pellets pounded her hair. "It's an emergency."

He used the phone in the history chair's office, more weary than anything else. Since Chris had left home, everything seemed to set off alarm bells in Caroline's head—she thought she heard a sound in the front end of the car, the telephone had rung three times in succession but nobody was there, the cat was refusing to eat and she was sure it was feline leukemia, because she'd just read an article about it in the local paper. What would it be this time—a furtive scratching in the attic? Mold eating at the caulking around the tub? He thought nothing. Stared at the crescent of white beach on the marked-up calendar tacked to the wall behind Jerry Mortensen's desk, as he dialled, and wished he could feel some sun on his face for a change. Florida. Maybe they'd go to Florida for the holidays, if Chris was up for it.

Caroline picked up on the second ring, and her words burned a hole right through him. "It's Chris," she said. "He's in the hospital." There was no quaver, no emotion, no cracking around the edges of what she was trying to convey. "He's in the hospital," she repeated.

"The hospital?"

"Jimmy," she said, and her voice cracked now, snapped like a compound fracture. "Jimmy. He's dying."



Dying? An eighteen-year-old athlete with a charmer's smile and no bad habits, heart like a clock, limbs of hammered wire, studious, dutiful, not a wild bone in his body?

There had been a party the night before. The streets were slick, power lines were down, rain turned to ice, ice to snow. Chris was one of twelve pledges at Delta Upsilon, a party-hearty fraternity that offered instant access to the social scene, and it was the pledges' responsibility to pick up the party supplies—beer, vodka, cranberry juice, chips and salsa, and bunting to drape over the doorways of the big white ocean liner of a house, which had belonged to a shipping magnate at the turn of the last century. None of them had a car, so they had to walk into town and back, three trips in all, over sidewalks that were like bobsled runs, the snow so thick it was coming down in clumps, and somebody—it was Sonny Hammerschmitt, twenty-three years old, fresh from four years in the Navy, and the only one of them who didn't need a fake I.D.—suggested that they stop in at the Owl's Eye and sneak a quick beer to get in the party mood. Chris tried to talk them out of it. "Are you kidding?" he said, a cardboard box bristling with the amber necks of tequila bottles perched up on one shoulder, while cars shushed by on the street and the intermediate distance blurred to white. "Dagan'll kill us if he finds out."

"Fuck Dagan. What's he going to do, blackball us? All of us?"

A snowball careened off the box, and Chris almost lost his grip on it. Everybody was laughing, breath steaming, faces red with novelty, with hilarity and release. He set down the box and pelted his pledge mates with snowballs, each in his turn. Directly across the street was the bar, a nondescript shingled building with a steep-pitched roof that might have been there when the Pilgrims came over—ancient, indelible, rooted like the trees. It was getting dark. Snow frosted the roof; the windows were pools of gold. A car crept up the street, chains jingling on its rear tires. Chris threw back his head and closed his eyes a moment, the snow accumulating like a cold compress on his eyelids. "Sure," he said. "O.K. Why not? But just one, and

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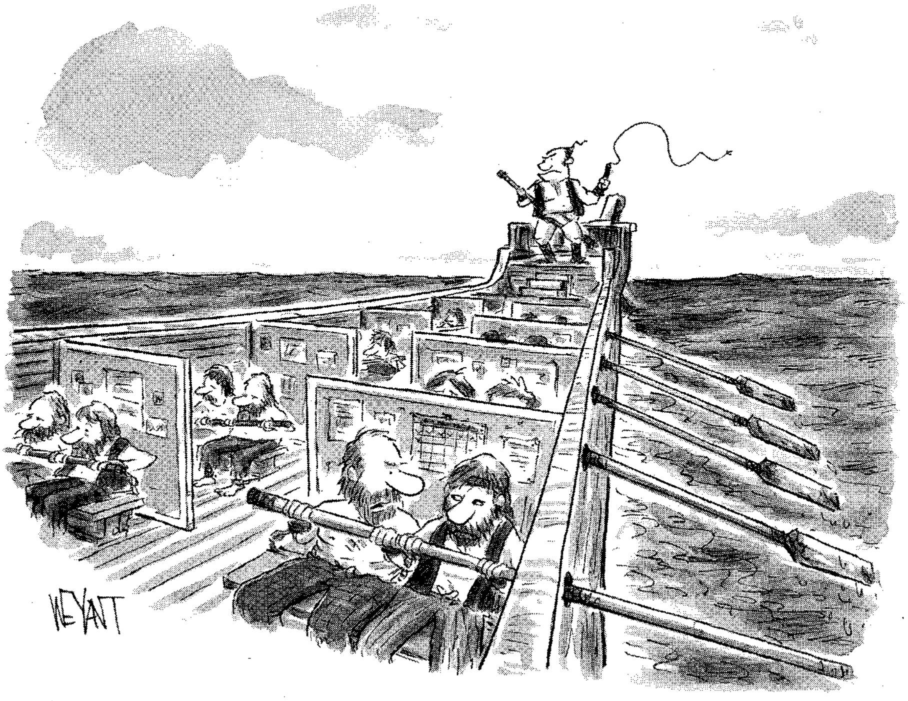


"I don't mind the whip. It's the cubicles I find demoralizing."

then we'd better . . ." but he never finished the thought.

Inside, it was like another world, like a history lesson, with jars of pickled eggs and Polish sausage lined up behind the bar, a display of campaign buttons from the forties and fifties—"I Like Ike"—and a fireplace, a real fireplace, split oak sending up fantails of sparks against a backdrop of blackened brick. The air smelled sweet—it wasn't a confectionery sweetness, or the false scent of air freshener, either, but the smell of wood and wood smoke, pipe tobacco, booze. Sonny got two pitchers of beer, and shots of peppermint schnapps all around. They were there for no more than half an hour—Dagan Drava, their pledgemaster, really would have their hides if he ever found out—and they drank quickly, greedily, drank as if they were getting away with something. Which they were. The snow mounted on the ledge outside the window. They had two more shots each and refilled the pitchers at least once, or maybe it was twice.

Then it was the party, a blur of grinning, lurching faces, the music like a second pulse, the laughter of the girls, the brothers treating the pledges almost like human beings, and everything made special by the snow that was still coming down, coming harder, coming like the end of the world. Every time the front door opened, the smell of it took hold of you as if you'd been plunged into a cold stream on the hottest day in August, and there would be two girls, two more girls, in knit hats pulled down to the eyebrows and scarves flung over their shoulders, stamping the snow from their boots and shouting, "A beer! A beer! My kingdom for a beer!"

Time contracted. One minute Chris and his pledge mates were scrambling to replenish the drinks and snacks on the big table in the dining room, everything reeking of spilled beer and tequila, as if a sea of it had washed through the house, from the attic on down to the basement, and the next minute the girls were gone, the night was settling in, and Dagan was there, cracking the whip. "All right, you dogs, I want this place clean—spotless, you understand me? You've got ten minutes, ten minutes and all the trash is out of here and every scrap of this shit off the floor." The rest of the brothers were standing around now, post-party, working on the keg—the ones who weren't off getting laid, that is—and they added jeers and head slaps, barking out random orders and making the pledges drop for twenty at the slightest provocation (and being alive, breathing, and present seemed provocation enough).

Like any other healthy eighteen-year-old, Chris drank, and he'd tried just about everything at least once. He was no angel on a pedestal, Jimmy knew that, and drinking—the taste for it—ran in his blood, sure it did, but in high school it had been beer only, and never to excess. Chris was afraid of what alcohol would do to him, to his performance on the field, to his grades, and more often than not he was the one who wound up driving everybody home after the post-game parties. But here he was, dense with it, his head stuffed full of cellulose, a screen pulled down over his eyes. He moved slowly and deliberately, lurching behind a black plastic bag full of wet trash, fumbling with the broom, the dustpan, listening for Dagan's voice in the mélange of shouts and curses and too loud dance music as if it were the one thing he could cling to, the one thing that would get him through this and into the shelter of his bed in the windowless room behind the stairway on the second floor.

"Wait a minute, what's this? Hey, Dagan. *Dagan.* You see this?" It was the guy they called Pillar, a senior who wore a perpetual look of disappointment on his face and was said to have once won the drinking contest at Harry's Bar in Key West by outlasting a three-hundred-pound Samoan through sixteen rounds of mojitos. He was holding up two still-sealed bottles of Don José tequila.

Dagan's face floated into the picture. "I see what you mean, bro—the place just isn't clean, is it? I mean, would you want to operate under these conditions?"

"Uh-uh, no way," Pillar said. "Not while these motherfucking bottles are sitting here. I'm offended. I really am. How about you, Dagan? Aren't you offended?"

Dude. That was what they called the drinking game, though Chris had never heard of it before and would never hear of it again. *Dude*, that was all, and the whole house was chanting it now, "Dude! Dude! Dude!" Dagan marched the pledges down to the game room in the basement, made them line up against the back wall, and handed each of them a shot glass. This was where the big-screen TV was, where the whole house gathered to watch the Pats and the Celtics and the porn videos that made your blood surge till you thought it was going to keep on going right out the top of your head.

It was 2 A.M. Chris couldn't feel his legs. Everything seemed funny suddenly, and he was laughing so hard he thought he was going to bring it all up, the beer, the schnapps, the pepperoni pizza and the chips and salsa and the Cheez Doodles, and his pledge mates were laughing, too. *Dude*, the funniest thing in the world. Then Dagan slipped the video into the VCR—"Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure"—and gave them their instructions, serious business now, a ritual, and no fooling around ("I'm serious, people, and wipe the smirks off your faces—you are in deep shit now"). Music, a flash of color, and there was Keanu Reeves, with his slice of an Asiatic face and disappearing eyes, playing the fool, or maybe playing to type, and every time he uttered the monosyllabic tag that gave the game its name, the pledge class had to lift the glasses to their lips and down a shot—"Hey, dude," " 'S up, dude"—till both bottles were drained.

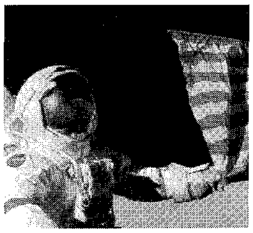
Benny Chung was the first one to break. He was seventeen, a National Merit Scholarship finalist, with narrow shoulders, wrists you could loop two fingers around, and a head that seemed to float up like a balloon from the tether of his neck. His shoulders dipped forward as if he were trying to duck under a low-hanging limb, then his lips pulled back and he spewed all over the floor and his pant legs and his black high-top Converse sneakers. It was a heroic effort, so much of that umber chowder coming out of so frail a vessel, and Benny had to go down on one knee to get it all out. Nobody said anything, and nobody was laughing now. Up on the screen, Keanu Reeves said the magic word, and all the pledges, including Benny, hammered another shot. Benny couldn't hold it, though, and neither could Chris. Chris saw the look on Benny's face—the outrage of an entire organism and all its constituent cells—and he felt his own legs buckling and the release the first wave of nausea gave him, and then he felt nothing more.

All the Delts were swarming the room now, expostulating over this disgusting display, this pathetic showing on the part of a pledge class that wasn't worthy of the name, and hands took hold of Benny and Chris, people shouting and jostling, the whinny of laughter, cries of "Gross!" and "Don't get any of that shit on me, man," the hands finding purchase at armpit and knee. They laid Benny and Chris side by side on Chris's bed, then thundered back down the two flights of stairs to the game room. Half an hour went by and both bottles of Don José were drained by the time anyone thought to look in on them, and another ten minutes elapsed before Dagan Drava, a pre-med student, realized that Chris wasn't breathing.

"So he was drunk," Jimmy told me, the band into its opening number now—blues, they were doing a blues tune that seemed vaguely familiar—"and who hasn't been drunk? I've been drunk a thousand times in my life, you know what I mean? So I figure, all the way up there with Caroline hyperventilating and what-if-ing and driving me half crazy, that we're going to walk into the hospital and he'll be sitting up in bed with a sheepish grin on his face, one hell of a headache, maybe, and a lesson learned, but no harm done."

Jimmy was wrong. His son had choked on his own vomit, inhaled it, compromising his lungs. No one knew how long he'd been lying there in the bed next to Benny Chung without drawing a breath before the E.R. team re-started his heart, and no one was sure how much damage had been done to his brain functions. A CT scan showed edema of the brain tissue. He was in a coma. A machine was breathing for him. Caroline went after the doctors like an inquisitor, relentless, terrifying in her grief. She stalked the halls, chased them to their cars, harangued them on the phone, demanded—and got—the top neurologist in New England. Chris's eyes never opened. Beneath the lids, like a dirty secret, his pupils dilated to full and stayed there, focussed on nothing. Two days later, he was dead.

I bought Jimmy a drink, watched myself in the mirror behind the bar. I didn't look like anybody I knew, but there



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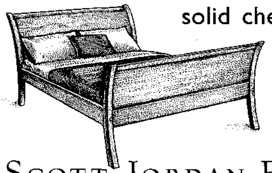

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I was, slouched over my drink, taking in air and letting it seep back out again. The woman with the deep-dredged laugh was gone. A couple in their twenties had settled into the vacant spot on the other side of Jimmy, oblivious of the drama that had just played out here, the woman perched on the barstool while the man stood in place, rocking in her arms to the beat of the music. The band featured a harp player, and he moved round the confines of the stage like a caged animal, riffling the notes till he'd gone all the way from despair to disbelief and back again, the bass player leaning in as if to brace himself, the guitar rising up slow and mournful out of the stew of the backbeat.

"Hey, don't feel sorry for me," Jimmy said. "I'm out here in California having the time of my life." He pointed a finger at the rain-streaked window. "All this sun really cheers me up."

I don't know why I asked—I was drunk, I guess, feeling maudlin, who knows?—but I said, "You got a place to stay tonight?"

He looked into the shot glass as if he might discover a motel key at the bottom of it. "I'm on sabbatical," he said. "Or on leave, actually. I was staying with my brother—up on Olive Mill—but he got to be a pain in the ass. Caroline couldn't take it. She's back in New York. At least, I think she is."

"Hard luck," I said, just to say something.

"Oh, yeah," he said. "Sure, and that's the long and the short of it. But I tell you, I clean up real nice, and what I plan to do is pick up one of these spare women here, like that one over there—the dye job that looks like she just crawled out of a coffin? She'll take me home with her, what you want to bet? And what you want to bet she's got a shower, maybe even a Jacuzzi?"

I didn't want to bet anything. I wanted another drink, that was all. And after that I wanted to have maybe one more, at this place up the street I'd been to a couple of times, just to see what was happening, because it was Saturday night and you never knew.

A week later—it was the next Friday, actually—I went into a place down in the marina for cocktails with a woman I'd almost picked up after I left Jimmy at the steak house the previous Saturday. Her name was Steena, she was five-ten, blond, and just getting over a major breakup with a guy named Steve whose name dropped from her lips with the frequency of a speech impediment. She'd agreed to "have a drink" with me, and though I'd hoped for more, I had to assume, after we'd had two glasses each of Piper-Heidsieck at twelve and a half dollars per and a plate of oysters, that I wasn't *her* type, either. The whole time she kept glancing at her watch, and finally her cell phone rang and she got up from the table and went out into the anteroom to take the call. It was Steve. She was sorry, but he wanted to meet her later, for dinner, and he sounded so sad and heartbroken and shot through with misery and contrition that she couldn't refuse. I had nothing to say. I just stared at her, the plate of desecrated oysters between us. "So," she said, hovering over the table as if she were afraid to sit back down, "I guess I'm going to have to say goodbye. It's been nice, though. Really."

I paid the waitress and moved up to the bar, idly watching the Lakers go through their paces with the sound muted and gazing out the window at the pale bleached forest of the ships' masts gathered there against the night. I was drinking brandy-and-water, picking through a bowl of artificial snack food and waiting for something to happen, when I ran into the other man I wanted to tell you about. Shaq's monumental head loomed up on the screen and then faded away again, and I turned around and there the guy was, just settling into the seat beside me. For a minute, I thought he was Jimmy—he had the same hangdog look, the rangy height, the air of an athlete gone to seed—and it gave me a start, because the last thing I needed the way I was feeling was another bout of one-way commiseration. He nodded a greeting, then looked up at the screen. "What's the score?"

"The Lakers are killing them," I said. "I think. I'm pretty sure, anyway." But this *was* Jimmy, had to be, Jimmy all dressed up, with his hair combed and looking satisfied with himself. It was then that I remembered the brother. "You wouldn't be Jimmy's brother, would you?" I said. "By any chance?"

"*Whose* brother?"

I felt foolish then. Obviously, Jimmy hadn't given me his real name, and why would he? The alcohol bloomed in my brain, petals unfolding like a rosebud in time-lapse photography. "It's nothing," I said. "I just thought . . ." I let it die, and went back to watching the game. Helped myself to the snacks. Had another brandy-and-water. After a while, the man beside me ordered dinner at the bar, and I got into a conversation about recycling and the crime of waste with a startled-looking woman and her Martini-fuelled husband. Gradually,

IN TRACKLESS WOODS

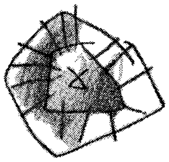
In trackless woods, it puzzled me to find
Four great rock maples seemingly aligned,
As if they had been set out in a row
Before some house a century ago,
To edge the property and lend some shade.
I looked to see if ancient wheels had made
Old ruts to which these trees ran parallel,
But there were none, so far as I could tell—
There'd been no roadway. Nor could I find the square
Depression of a cellar anywhere,
And so I tramped on further, to survey
Amazing patterns in a hornbeam spray
Or spirals in a pinecone, under trees
Not subject to our stiff geometries.

—*Richard Wilbur*

the bar filled up. The startled-looking woman and her husband went in to dinner and somebody else took their place. Nothing was happening. Absolutely nothing. I was thinking that I should move on, pick up a pizza, some takeout, make it an early night, and I could envision myself standing at the supercharged counter of Paniagua's Pizza Palace, where you could get two slices with chorizo and jalapeños for three dollars and fifty cents, but instead I found myself turning to the man on my left. "You do have a brother, though, right?" I said.

He gave me a long, slow, deliberate look, then shrugged. "What, does he owe you money?"

So we talked about Jimmy, Jimmy's tragedy, Jimmy's refusal to accept facts, and the way Jimmy was running hard up against the sharp edges of the world and was sure to wind up in a coffin, just like his father before him and his son, too, if he didn't get himself into rehab as his No. 1 priority. Then we talked about me, but I didn't reveal much, and then it was general subjects, the look of the people on TV as opposed to the look of the flesh-and-blood people sitting at the tables at our feet like an undiscovered tribe, and then, inevitably, we came back to alcohol. I told him about some of my escapades; he told me about his. I was probably on my sixth or seventh brandy-and-water when we got back as far as our mutual childhoods lived mutually under the shadow of booze, though on opposite coasts. The brother was in an expansive mood, his wife and six-year-old daughter gone for the weekend to a Little Miss pageant in Sacramento, and the four walls of his house—or eight or sixteen or however many there were—inadequate to contain him. I took a sip of my drink and let him fly.



He was three years older than Jimmy, and they had two other brothers and a sister, all younger. They had moved around a lot as kids, but one winter they were living out in Dutchess County, at the junction of two blacktop roads where there were a handful of summer cabins that had been converted to cheap year-round housing, a two-pump gas station where you could get milk, bread, and Coke in eight-ounce bottles, and a five-stool roadhouse called the Pine-Top Tavern, with a jukebox and a griddle. The weather turned nasty, their father was out of work and about a month from bailing out for good, and neither of their parents left the tavern for more than a shower or a shave or to put a couple of cans of chicken broth in a saucepan and dump a handful of rice and sliced wieners in on top of it so the kids would have something to eat. Jimmy's brother had a cough that wouldn't go away. Their little sister had burned her arm on the stove trying to make herself a can of tomato soup, and the brother had to change her bandage twice a day and rub ointment into the exfoliated skin. Jimmy spent his time out in the weed-blistered lot behind the house, kicking a football as close to vertical as he could, over and over again, then slanting off to retrieve it before it could hit the ground. Their dog—Gomer, named after the TV character—had been killed crossing the road on Christmas Eve, and their father blamed one of the drunks leaving the tavern, but nobody did anything about it.

It was just after Christmas—or maybe after New Year's, because school had started up again—when a cold front came down off Hudson Bay and froze everything so thoroughly that nobody could stand to be out-of-doors for more than five minutes at a time. The birds huddled under the eaves of the tavern, looking distressed; the squirrels hung like ornaments in the stripped trees. Everybody in the family drank hot tea thick with honey and the oily residue of the bitter lemon juice that came out of a plastic squeeze bottle, and that was the only time their hands seemed to warm up. When they went outside, the bare ground crackled underfoot as if it were crusted with snow and, for a few days there, none of the converted cabins had water, because the lines from the well had frozen underground.

Jimmy's brother remembered his father, wizened forearms propped up on the bar in a stained khaki parka he'd worn in Korea, a sheaf of hair canted the wrong way because it hadn't seen a comb in days, the smoke of his cigarette fuming in the dark forge of the bar. And his mother, happiest woman in the world, laughing at anything, laughing till all the glasses were drained and the lights went

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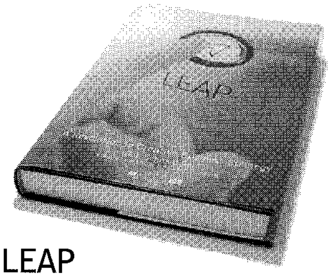

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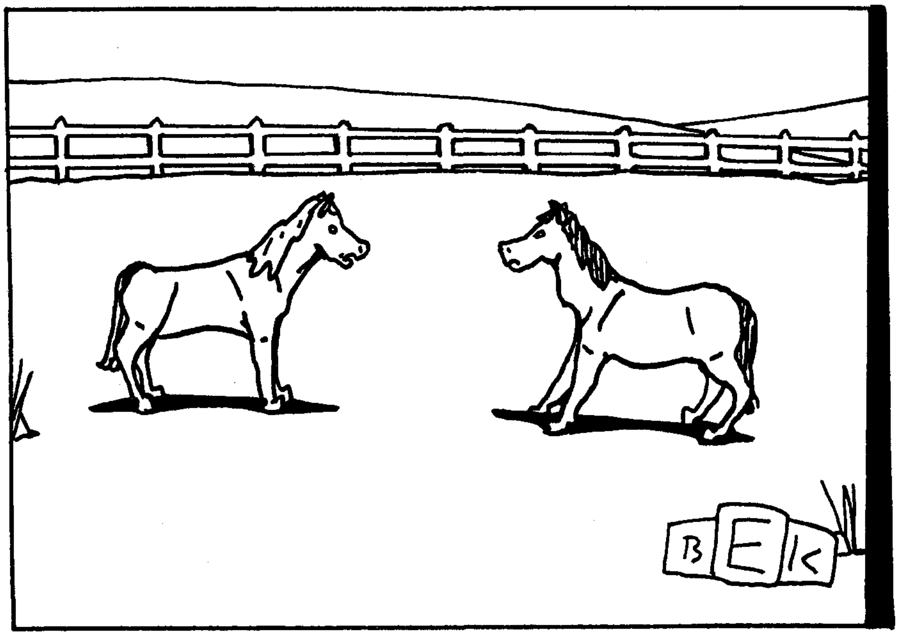
out and the big-bellied bartender shooed them out the door and locked the place up for the night.

It was cold. The space heater did nothing, less than nothing, and Jimmy's brother could have earned his merit badge as a fire starter that winter because all he did was scavenge the skeletal forest for fallen branches, rotten stumps, and fence posts, anything that would burn, managing to keep at least a continuous smolder going day and night. And then he got up for school one morning and there was an old woman—or a woman his mother's age, anyway—laid out snoring on the couch in front of the fireplace where the dog used to sleep. He went into his parents' room and shook his mother awake. "There's somebody sleeping out there on the couch," he told her, and watched her gather her features together and assess the day. He had to repeat himself twice, her warmth and the warmth of his father beside her rising up to him with a sweet-sick odor of sex and infirmity, and then she murmured through her cracked lips, "Oh, that's only Grace. You know Grace—from the tavern? Her car won't start, that's all. Be a good boy, huh, and don't wake her?"

He didn't wake her. He got his brothers and sister out of bed, then huddled with them at the bus stop in the dark, jumping from foot to foot to keep warm and imagining himself on a polar expedition with Amundsen, sled dogs howling at the stars and the ice plates shifting like dominoes beneath their worn and bleeding paws. There was a pot on the stove when he got home from school, some sort of incarnadine stew with a smell of the exotic spices his mother never used—mace, cloves, fennel—and he thought of Grace, with her scraggle of gray-black hair and her face that was like a dried-up field plowed in both directions. He tasted it—they all sampled it, just to see if it was going to be worth eating—and somehow it even managed to taste of Grace, though how could anybody know what Grace tasted like unless they were a cannibal?

His parents weren't at home. They were three hundred feet away, in the tavern, with Grace and the rest of their good-time buddies. A few dispirited snowflakes sifted down out of the sky. He made himself a sandwich of peanut butter and sliced banana, then went over to the tavern to see if his parents or anybody else there was in that phase of rhapsodic drunkenness where they'd give up their loose change as if they were philanthropists rolling down Park Avenue in an open Rolls-Royce. One guy, hearty, younger than the rest, in a pair of galoshes with the buckles torn off, gave him a fifty-cent piece, and then his father told him to get the hell out of the bar and stay out till he was of legal age or he'd kick his ass for him but good.



"Really, only you can tell yourself to giddyup."

The next morning was even colder, and Jimmy's brother was up early, shivering despite the rancid warmth generated by his three brothers and the cheap sleeping bag advertised for comfort even at five below zero, which might as well have been made of shredded newspaper for all the good it did. He put the kettle on to boil so they could have tea and instant oatmeal to fortify them out there in the wind while they were waiting for the school bus to come shunting down the hill with its headlights reduced to vestigial eyes and the driver propped up behind the black windshield like a blind cave fish given human form. The house was dark but for the overhead light in the kitchen. There was no sound anywhere, nothing from his parents or his brothers and sister, everybody locked in a sleep that was like a spell in a fairy tale, and he missed the dog then, if only to see it stretch and yawn and nose around in its dish. The kettle came to a boil, and he'd actually put three tea bags in the pot and begun pouring the water before he realized that something was wrong. What was it? He strained his ears, but there was nothing to hear. Not even the tick of the stove or the creak and whine of the house settling into the cold, no sound of stirring birds or tires revolving on the blacktop road. It was then that he thought to check the time.

There was a clock built into the stove, foreshortened hands painted gold behind a greased-over plastic lens. It was 3:35 A.M. Jimmy's brother could have kicked himself. He sat in the kitchen, shivering, and drank a cup of tea, wishing it would snow so they'd call off school and he could sleep all day. After a while, he decided to build up the fire in the living room and sit there on the couch and terrify himself with "Dracula"—he was only halfway through, though he'd started it at Halloween—and then maybe he'd drift off for a while till it was time to get up. He shrugged into his coat and went to the kitchen door, thinking of the punky wood he and Jimmy had stacked in the shed over the weekend.

But then—and I was ahead of him here, because you'd have had to be as blind as a cave fish yourself not to see where this was going—the storm door wouldn't give. There was something there, an immovable shadow stretched long and dark across the doorstep, and it took everything the brother had to wedge the door open enough to squeeze out into the night. And when he did pull himself out into the cold, and the killing, antipathetic breath of it hit him full in the face, he willed the shadow at his feet to take shape until he could distinguish the human form there, with her fixed eyes and the dirty scraggle of gray-black hair.

"Grace?" I said.

Jimmy's brother nodded.

"Jesus," I said. "And your brother—did he see her there?"

He shrugged. "I don't know. I don't remember. She was a drunk, that was all, just another drunk."

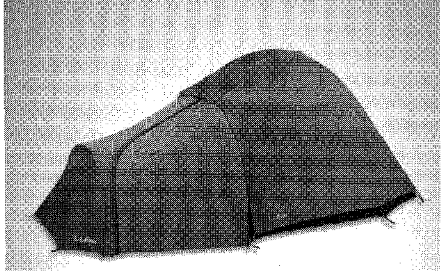
We sat for a moment, looking past our drinks to the marina and the black unbroken plane of the sea beyond it. I had an impulse to open up to him, to tell him my story, or one of my stories, as if we were clasping hands at an A.A. meeting, but I didn't. I made a clucking sound, meant to signify sympathy and understanding, threw some money on the bar, and went out the door, feeling for my keys. What I didn't tell him, though he might have known it himself, was that Jimmy had put his son in a crematory box at the hospital and put the box in the back of his Suburban and driven it home and into the garage, and all night, while his wife lay stiff and sedated in the big queen-size bed upstairs, Jimmy had hugged the coffin to him. I didn't tell him that life is a struggle against weakness, fought not in the brain or in the will but in the cells, in the enzymes, in the key that DNA inserts into the tumbler of our personalities. And I didn't tell him that I had a son myself, just like Jimmy, though I didn't see him as much as I would have wanted to, not anymore.

The fact was that I hadn't wanted a son, hadn't planned on it or asked or prayed or hoped for or even imagined it. I was twenty-four. My wife was pregnant and I raged at her, *Get rid of it, you're ruining my life, we can't afford it, you're crazy, get rid of it, get rid of it.* She was complete in herself, sweet-faced and hard-willed, and mine was a voice she couldn't hear. She went to Lamaze classes, quit drinking, quit smoking, did her exercises, read all the books. My son was born in the Kaiser hospital in Panorama City, eight pounds, six ounces, as healthy as a rat and beautiful in his own way, and I was his father, though I wasn't ready to be. He was nine months old when one of my drinking buddies—call him Chris, why not?—came for the weekend and we went on a tear. My wife put up with it, even joined in a bit, and on Monday morning, when she had to go in early to work, Chris and I took her out for breakfast.

The day beat down like a hammer and everything in the visible world shone as if it had been lit from within. We'd been up till four, and now it was seven, and while we were waiting for a table Chris and I ducked into the men's room and alternated hits from a pint of Smirnoff we were planning to doctor our fresh-squeezed orange juice with. So we were feeling fine as we pushed the waffles around our plates and my wife smiled and joked and the baby unfurled his arms and grabbed at things in high baby spirits. Then my wife touched up her makeup and left, and right away the mood changed. Here was this baby, my son, with his multiplicity of needs, his diapers and his stroller and all the rest of it, and I was in charge.

We finally hit upon the plan of taking him to the beach, to get a little sun, throw a Frisbee, let the sand mold itself to us through the long, slow-simmering morning and into the afternoon and the barbecue I was planning for Chris's send-off. The beach was deserted, a board-stretched canvas for gulls and pelicans and snapping blue waves, and as soon as we stepped out of the car I felt that everything was all right again. My son was wearing nothing but his diaper, and Chris and I were laughing over something, and I tossed my son up in the air, a game we played, and he loved it, squealing and crying out in baby ecstasy. I tossed him again, and then I tossed him to Chris and Chris tossed him back, and that was when I lost my balance and the black sea-honed beak of a half-buried rock loomed up on me and I saw my future in that instant: I was going to drop my son, let him slip through my fingers in a moment of aberration, and he was going to be damaged in a way that nobody could repair.

It didn't happen. I caught him, and held on, and I never let go. ♦



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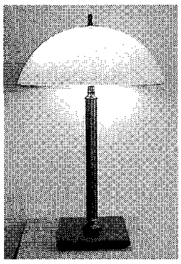

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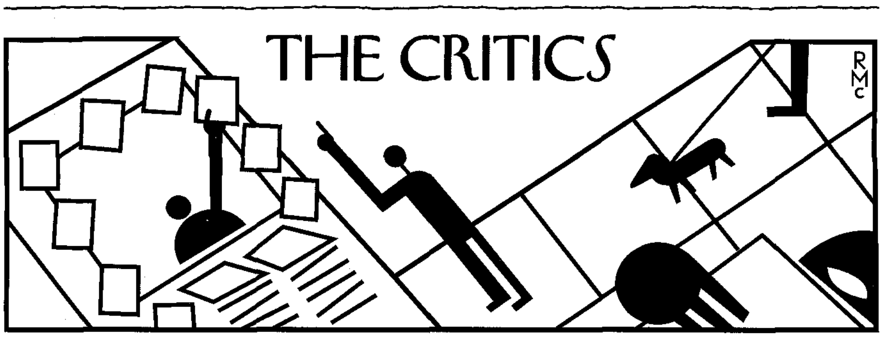


MUSICAL EVENTS

TO HELL AND BACK

The savage genius of Berlioz.

BY ALEX ROSS

"Berlioz believed neither in God nor in Bach, neither in absolute beauty in art nor in pure virtue in life," his friend Ferdinand Hiller recalled. The composer of the "Symphonie Fantastique" retains a fashionably satanic aura, and the reputation is well earned. The "Fantastique," his masterpiece, anyone's masterpiece, remains a totally shocking work after all these years, and no modern music has ever really matched it. The symphony's inexhaustible novelty comes not from the discovery of new sounds—although there are many—but from the diabolical manipulation of familiar ones. The C-major coda is brilliant, triumphant, and horribly wrong, the God-given natural scale smeared with flat notes. Thus ends a voyage into Hell undertaken not for moral reasons but for the sheer joy of going under. As Satan remarks in "Paradise Lost," explaining why Hell is better than Heaven, "Here at least we shall be free."

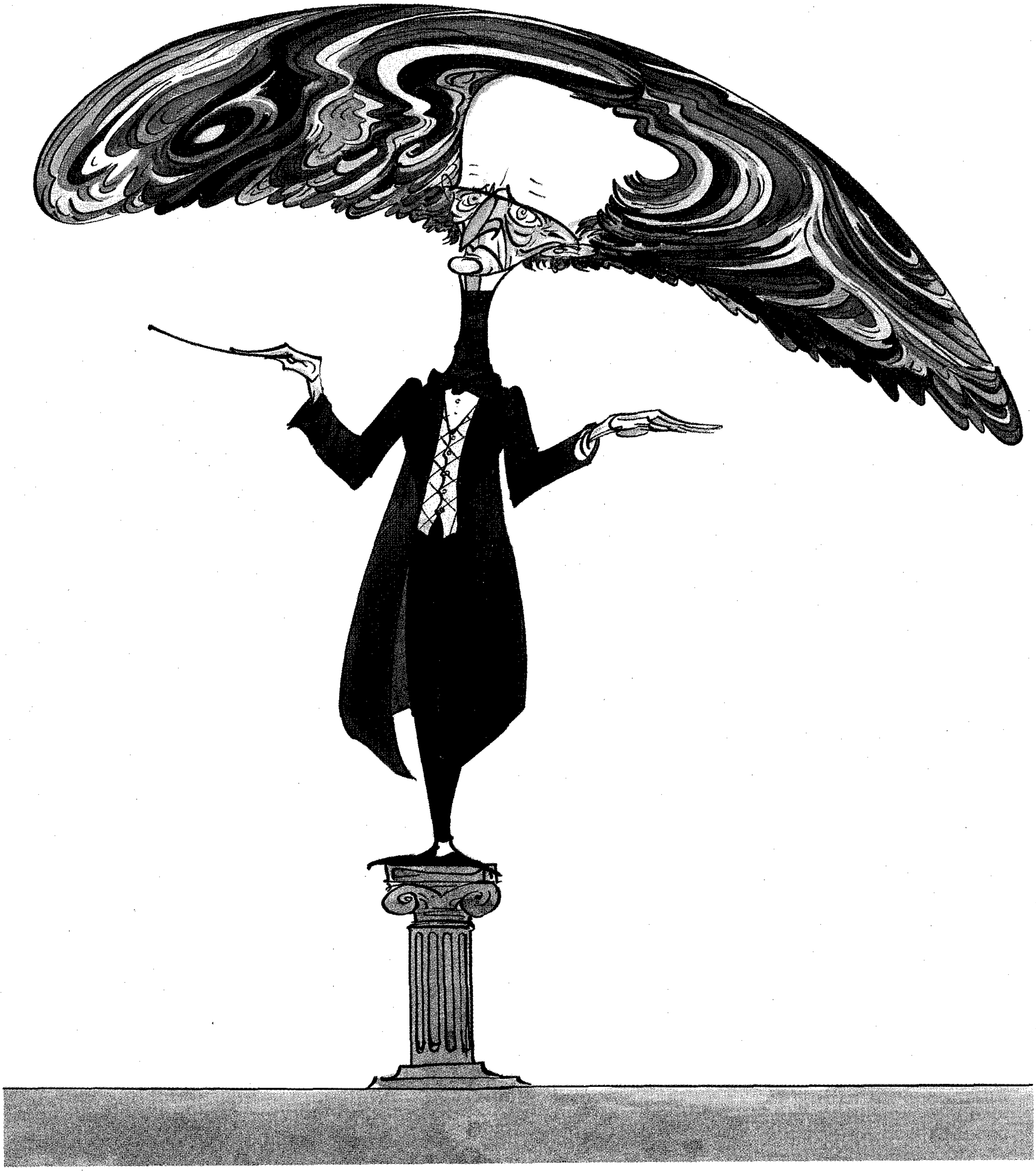
Lincoln Center's festival in honor of the bicentennial of Berlioz's birth, which began with three astonishing concerts by the London Symphony Orchestra, is called "Fantastic Voyages: The Genius of Hector Berlioz." This hits the mark, although it was genius of a particular kind. Unlike Mozart, Schubert, and other prodigies born with music in their blood, Berlioz came to the art from the outside, in a spirit of intellectual adventure. He read about it in encyclopedias, imagined it in his dreams, and, in adolescence, decided to conquer it. He grew up in a small town in the South of France, where his musical diet consisted mainly of marching tunes, comic-opera ditties, and Gregorian chant. Not until around the time of his eighteenth birthday, in 1821, did he hear a full-scale classical work—"Les Danaïdes," by Salieri. He had come to Paris to attend medical school, and he alarmed his fellow-students by singing Salieri's arias while sawing the skulls of cadavers.

Berlioz's understanding of music was all up in that big, hawklike head of his: reality had to be bent to accommodate his ideals. In his youth, he would stand in the stalls of the Paris Opera and rage against every small inaccuracy and embellishment. "Who has dared to correct Gluck?" he would shout during a pause. "Not a sign of a trombone; it is intolerable!" Conductors began to heed his pronouncements, and soon enough he himself was the dictator on the podium, forcing musicians to follow the letter of the score. He also earned money in the field of music criticism, and his slashing commentaries set the standard for this little art. His compulsively readable "Memoirs" are at once a picaresque narrative of a wild life and a mockery of the very idea of putting a life on paper. After telling us how he taught himself to play a tune on the recorder, he sardonically adds, "What biographer worth his salt could fail to detect here the germ of my aptitude for large-scale effects of wind instruments?" When you talk about Berlioz, you can't escape the feeling that somewhere he is sniggering at every earnest word.

The "Memoirs" suggest that in some perverse way Berlioz saw his failures as his greatest successes. In a three-page description of the disastrous première of his "Sardanapalus" cantata, in 1830, he writes, almost exultantly, "The decrescendo begins." He devotes only three sentences to the subsequent triumph of the "Symphonie Fantastique." The last pages of the "Memoirs" are particularly striking in their bid for antipathy. The first draft ends with the sentence "I despise you all, and trust to have forgotten you before I die." The second version ends, "I have neither hopes, nor illusions, nor great thoughts left . . . I say hourly to death: 'When you will!' Why does he delay?" The final manuscript ends with Macbeth's remarks about life signifying nothing. Berlioz accomplished the rare feat of putting the last nail in his own coffin.

The "Symphonie Fantastique" was written in 1830, within the space of about six weeks, although the idea had been germinating for years. Program notes invariably emphasize the symphony's connection with Berlioz's imaginary love life at the time of its composition—his unrequited passion for the English actress Harriet Smithson, a supporting player who came to Paris in 1827 and made a great impression on French intellectuals. Smithson rejected Berlioz, or, more precisely, avoided his stalking advances. In the end, she was only playing a role that the composer had written for her—she was "an ideal which I created myself," as he later admitted. It was a passion destined to fail, so that the artist could vault all the extremes of feeling and land in the hell of his imagination. A little later, Berlioz actually succeeded in marrying Smithson, and began to lose interest.

As David Cairns argues in his huge biography of the composer, "Symphonie Fantastique" is really a Faust work, possibly the remnant of a Faust symphony that Berlioz had been planning. Faust's journey begins not with an affair of the heart but with an affair of the mind—a passion for the dark and the strange. The "Fantastique," likewise, starts with a vague longing and ends in



A celebration of Berlioz confirms that he was not a flashy dilettante but a masterful dramatist of sound and emotion.

GERALD SCARFE

an inferno. As in Goethe's version, all these demonic doings are contained within strict, rigorous forms. Some passages are actually quite anachronistic for the year 1830; the composer's concept of the "fantastic" is more Baroque than Romantic. As Cairns puts it, "Berlioz writes nineteenth-century music with an eighteenth-century sound." In other passages, the music sounds brand-new, as if it had been written last month by a young genius of postmodernism.

Colin Davis is a supremely good conductor of Berlioz, and his rendition of the "Symphonie Fantastique" was one of the most gripping orchestral performances I've heard in years. Davis began the piece in a wondering, sensitive, almost hesitant mood; by holding down dynamic levels, tugging back on the beat, and letting Berlioz's long lyrical phrases hang for an extra moment in the air, he created a sense of music afraid to go over the brink. In the middle movements, "A Ball" and "Scene in the Fields," the orchestra produced textures of remarkable clarity, so that one was constantly aware of the stray flutes and sinister tubas prowling at the edges of the picture. In the "March to the

Scaffold," Davis straightened out the tempo, stripped away the color, and let the brass and percussion run rampant. Right through to the end, the orchestra played like a cold, fatal machine; there was none of the carnivalesque, Halloween atmosphere familiar from standard interpretations. The final effect was overwhelming, and more than a little frightening—the man on the podium, standing in for the protagonist of the symphony, seemed to have undergone a Jekyll-and-Hyde transformation. In this, Davis was faithful to the spirit of a composer who chose to live on the mental edge, without illusions.

By the end of the bicentennial year, New Yorkers will have heard, in the opera house or the concert hall, almost all of Berlioz's major works. The Metropolitan Opera, having mounted a monster production of "The Trojans," has announced the grandly ebullient comic opera "Benvenuto Cellini" for next season. The London Symphony, under Davis's direction, has already given us "Harold in Italy," "Damnation of Faust," and "Romeo and Juliet"; next month, Davis will return to lead the New York Philharmonic in "Beatrice and Benedict," Berlioz's autumnal Shakespeare comedy. Last month, Charles Dutoit led the Philharmonic, the Westminster Symphonic Choir, and the tenor Paul Groves in a cool, masterly performance of the "Requiem." I only wish that someone had taken on the "Symphonie Funèbre et Triomphale," in which Berlioz raises the military band music of his youth to awesome heights.

It used to be said that the "Symphonie Fantastique" was Berlioz's sole masterpiece, and that his later works unmasked him as a "genius without talent"—a dilettante who mixed magnificent orchestral effects with inept fugues and insipid arias. Berlioz scholars, such as Cairns, Jacques Barzun, Hugh Macdonald, and Peter Bloom, have argued forcefully that the composer knew exactly what he was doing, and that whenever he sounds awkward he is actually ahead of his time. Indeed, pieces like "The Trojans" and "Beatrice and Benedict" show Berlioz fast-forwarding through the entire modernist revolution into the world of the neoclassical Stravinsky. Their austere vocal lines and gossamer textures sound strange only if the listener is waiting for a reprise of the "Fantastique." Berlioz specialists, like Davis and Dutoit, know how to sustain tension over long lyrical paragraphs, which otherwise threaten to meander into a meta-stylistic nowhere.

The challenge in listening to this composer is to resist the preconceptions that we bring to nineteenth-century music, especially those derived from Wagner. It is a tricky thing to do, since Berlioz and Wagner resembled each other in so many ways. Both sought unheard-of masses of sound, and both used isolated orchestral timbres as themes in themselves. What's more, Wagner ripped off many of his ideas directly from Berlioz, as a side-by-side comparison of "Romeo and Juliet" and "Tristan und Isolde" attests. But the two Romantic revolutionaries were opposed on almost every aesthetic question of the day. Wagner wanted to break down historic musical forms; Berlioz wanted to preserve them. Wagner threatened to discard melody as a concept, whereas Berlioz wrote easy-flowing tunes of almost aggressive sentimentality and naïveté.

Berlioz's music should somehow be played and heard in an alternative universe in which Wagner never existed. This is what Davis understands so well; instead of marking time until the next sonic spectacular, as James Levine sometimes did while conducting "Trojans" at the Met, Davis exulted in all the oddities and incongruities. In "The Damnation of Faust," he whipped up Hungarian marches, student songs, and peasant rounds as enthusiastically as he did the shimmering string effects and jagged assaults of the brass. He convinced us that this stop-and-start narrative—in which Faust never advances far into the realms of the sublime without being interrupted by some form of street music—came out of a dramatic, keenly ironic sensibility. His singers, the tenor Stuart Neill, the mezzo-soprano Petra Lang, and the bass Alastair Miles, took up the idiom without a trace of awkwardness or self-consciousness. Lang's singing of "The King of Thule"—gentle on the surface, tense and sad beneath—afforded a glimpse of the composer's innermost world, where, for once, no shadows fell between the music and the heart.

For decades, modern French composers have been devoted to precisely the sort of stylistic purity and progressive ideology that Berlioz disdained. But a recent concert of the music of Marc-André Dalbavie at the Guggenheim Museum suggested that a new diversity may be emerging in the world so long governed by Pierre Boulez. The Dalbavie concert was part of a month-long, citywide festival called Sounds French; still to come are Pascal Dusapin's opera "To Be Sung," an eerie blend of voices and electronics, and Olivier Messiaen's opulent piano cycle "Catalogue d'Oiseaux," to be played bravely in one sitting by Roger Muraro.

Dalbavie, who is perhaps the most widely performed of French composers younger than fifty, has written a fair amount of music of the twittering, skittering, Boulezian kind. But the three pieces heard at the Guggenheim broke free of modernist clichés. "Palimpsest," for violin, viola, cello, flute, clarinet, and piano, conjured an extraordinary variety of sounds from fragments of a Gesualdo madrigal, at one point erupting into furious scales right out of a Vivaldi concerto. "Sextine Cyclus" was a beautifully arranged though somewhat overextended anthology of medieval songs; Jean-Paul Fouchécourt sang them with loving eloquence, and members of the Orchestre de Paris provided a glistening accompaniment.

Most striking was "Chants," for six singers and a chamber ensemble, based on Ezra Pound's adaptations of classical poetry and troubadour songs. This was a world première, and a significant one. Tonality seemed to dissolve and reform several times, as if a new language were struggling to be born. The splendid vocalists of the New York group Lionheart, for whom the piece was written, stood in a ring around the audience, answering each other antiphonally or uniting in high, unearthly harmonies. I thought for a moment of the Tuba Mirum of Berlioz's "Requiem," in which the trumpets of the Last Judgment sound from all corners of the hall. Dalbavie's music felt like the last echo of that catastrophe as it dissipated into empty space. ♦

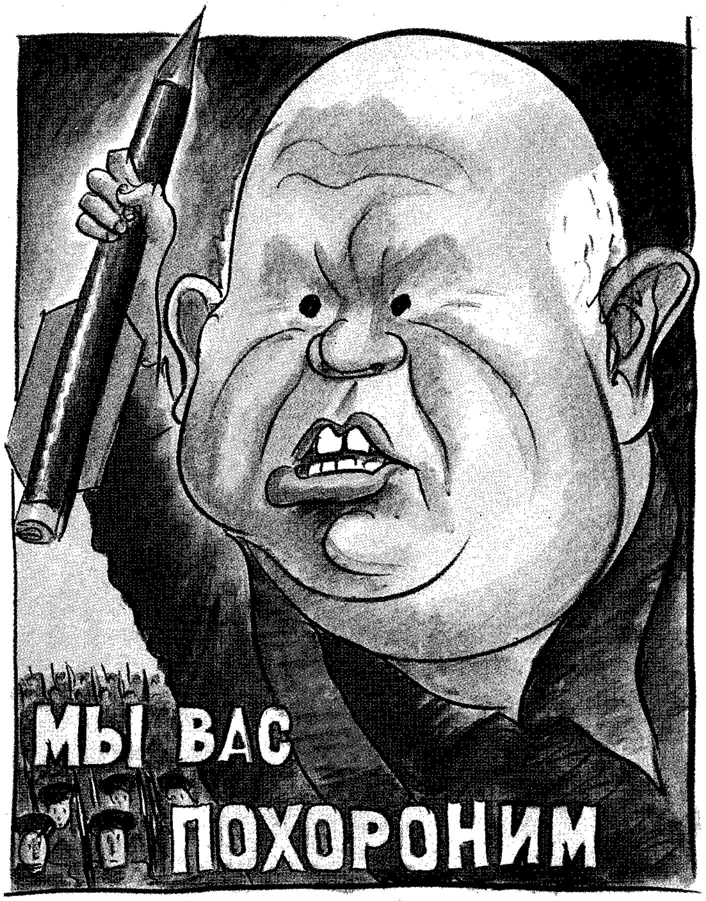
BOOKS

LOUDMOUTH

The first comprehensive biography of Stalin's successor.

BY ROBERT CONQUEST

Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev was the unquestioned leader of the Soviet Union from 1957 to 1964. In this fairly short span, he managed to provoke two major international crises; survive a coup (a second toppled him); order two disastrous economic overhauls; and hold erratic confrontations with nearly everyone in sight—with the Chinese leadership, with Presidents Kennedy and Nixon, with the neo-Stalinists in his Presidium and the Russian intellectuals in his midst. On visits to the United States, he pounded his shoe at the United Nations, ogled Marilyn Monroe's derrière, and cheerily shovelled manure in Iowa with the locals.



"We will bury you," Khrushchev once said to a group of Western diplomats.

EDWARD SOREL

What was Khrushchev like? William Taubman, a professor of political science at Amherst College, has now published "Khrushchev: The Man and His Era" (Norton; $35), the first comprehensive and scholarly biography of Stalin's successor. As part of a painstaking attempt to answer the question, he quotes the psychologist Nancy McWilliams on the "hypomanic" type: "Elated, energetic, self-promoting . . . work-addicted . . . lacking a systematic approach. . . . Grand schemes, racing thoughts . . . constantly 'up'—until exhaustion eventually sets in." It's not everything, but it's a start.

When Stalin died, in March, 1953, Khrushchev was still in the leadership ranks of the Communist Party, despite a series of purges. Shortly before his death, Stalin was preparing yet another purge. Khrushchev was not on the list. What characteristics saved him? Among other things, no doubt, was his very volubility—the impression of holding nothing back. More generally, though, he had an air of being from the people, the *narod*. Khrushchev was from Ukrainian peasant stock, and at fourteen he went to work in the Ukrainian coal mines. As Stalin's notorious foreign minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, put it, "Khrushchev was no accident. We are primarily a peasant country."

Khrushchev was born in 1894 in the Kursk region, and when he was fourteen the family moved to the proletarian mining city of Yuzovka (which was later renamed Stalino, and then Donetsk). He began reading *Pravda* in 1915, as a metal-fitter in the mines, but he didn't join the Bolshevik Party until more than a year after the Revolution. Khrushchev said that while working at foreign-owned enterprises he "discovered something about capitalists. They are all alike, whatever the nationality. All they wanted from me was the most work for the least money that kept me alive. So I became a Communist." He served in local Party organizations in Ukraine, and in 1929 he went to Moscow, where he became involved in the city Party committee. During the early infighting in the Party, Khrushchev sided first with the Trotskyites—not, as it turned out, an ideal entry on one's Communist curriculum vitae. For nearly any other Soviet politician of the nineteen-thirties, this would have been a blemish worthy of execution. Stalin merely forced Khrushchev to make a frank confession of it. Stalin's view of the matter seems to have been that the true Trotskyites came from the older Party intelligentsia—the professional revolutionaries. A naïf, a semiliterate worker member, likely appeared to Stalin an ignorant dupe, not a lost soul. Khrushchev himself seems to have attributed his rise to "luck": he met Stalin's wife, Nadezhda, while taking a course at the Industrial Academy, and she passed the name, and her approval, along to her husband.

In one sense, Taubman's chapters on the struggle for power, first under Stalin and then among his competing successors, remind one of Saint-Simon (the courtier, not the socialist). Ambition, intrigue, slander, temporary alliances, and betrayals: the essentials are the same. The tone, however, is rather different. In place of the well-turned, feline exchanges of Versailles, there is a certain coarseness. (Khrushchev, a prolific user of profane language, was particularly adept in this regard.) We find, for example, the secret-police chief Lavrenty Beria pinning on the back of Khrushchev's jacket a label bearing the word "prick"—hard to imagine in the Bourbon court.

Taubman's biography gives a thorough account of Khrushchev's early career, and he does not play down Khrushchev's role in the 1937-38 Great Terror. When he was appointed head of the Ukrainian Party committee, in 1938, he pledged to "spare no efforts in seizing and annihilating all agents of fascism, Trotskyites, Bukharinites, and all those despicable bourgeois nationalists." His suppression of the Ukrainian nationalist movement in the mid-forties was ruthless. Taubman notes that three-quarters of a million men, aged nineteen to fifty, were conscripted, given eight days' training, and thrown straight into battle against the Germans. All this is a reminder that the huge Soviet mortality rate in the war cannot be presented simply as heroic sacrifice.

After the prolonged power struggle that followed Stalin's death, Khrushchev emerged as the leader of the Communist Party. Countless prisoners in the Gulag camp system were freed. On February 25, 1956, Khrushchev went before a closed session of the Twentieth Party Congress and delivered a speech that proved to be his most lasting legacy. He denounced Stalin's "personality cult," his "capricious and despotic character," and the "brutal violence" with which he ruled the country. Khrushchev, who was also interested in lifting blame from his own generation and in continuing the regime, delegitimatized Stalin, yet, at the time, he did not seem to realize what the results would be. The "secret speech," which was soon leaked to the Western media, provided only limited details of the torture and execution of leading Party members, but it began the long process of exposing and, eventually, undermining Communist authority in the Soviet Union and abroad. The speech sparked rebellion in Poland and the Hungarian Revolution. It shocked into sanity a whole stratum of the Western intelligentsia that had, to one degree or another, accepted the fairy tale as painted by Stalin and his court historians. When Gorbachev resumed the Khrushchev initiative, thirty years later, he, too, began by revealing suppressed secrets of Party history; and he, too, began hesitantly, fearful of attacking Lenin, lest it lead to the immediate collapse of the entire Bolshevik project. But that would come.

Khrushchev's forays into foreign affairs were especially erratic, incandescent. In his relations with foreigners, Khrushchev was always, and openly, alert for any sign that he, or the Soviet regime, was being "disrespected." And he was always prepared to respond with disrespect of his own. In Paris, he thought (wrongly) that he was being hissed by West German journalists, and he shouted about the "fascist bastards we didn't finish off at Stalingrad." After a confrontation with Harold Macmillan in Moscow, he told an associate in the leadership that he had "fucked [the British Prime Minister] with a telephone pole." It was also a trifle undiplomatic to tell the Americans that he had bombs ready for France and Britain. During a series of tense negotiations with the Chinese Communist leadership in Beijing, Khrushchev, in a room that he certainly knew was bugged, entertained his delegation with obscene rhymes about various Chinese leaders, and references to Mao as "old galoshes"—a term for a used condom in both Russian and Chinese slang.

Taubman's chapter on the Cuban crisis of 1962 is a full accounting of Khrushchev's huge and dangerous miscalculations. Even in this supposedly planned venture, and with the possibility of worldwide destruction, a remarkable level of incompetence prevailed. The general who was chosen to be in charge, Issa Pliyev, was distinguished only for having put down a rebellion of Soviet workers in the southern city of Novocherkassk earlier that year. Described as knowing "more about horses than missiles," Pliyev impressed no one in the Soviet hierarchy but, nevertheless, was given authority to launch tactical nuclear missiles.

It is clear from Taubman's book that of the three parties involved the Cubans were the most reckless. Taubman quotes the remarkable letter from Castro to Moscow in effect arguing that the U.S.S.R. must use a first strike against the United States in the expected final crisis. The author suggests that Castro's attitude was due, in part, to his belief that the Soviets held nuclear superiority over the United States—and that they could destroy it even if they suffered great damage themselves. That would mean that the Cubans had accepted Soviet disinformation. Taubman describes well how Castro was, in turn, enraged by the Soviet withdrawal, calling Khrushchev "son of a bitch . . . bastard . . . asshole. . . . *No cojones* [balls]. . . . *Maricón* [homosexual]."

How did Khrushchev keep power? The question persists not merely because of the inanity or the collapse of his policies. He was also tactless with his allies and subordinates. Brezhnev, who finally helped unseat him, recalled that he had once called his Kremlin colleagues "dogs peeing on curbstones." Khrushchev described his loyal foreign minister, Andrei Gromyko, as "a piece of shit"—a favorite expression usually reserved for rivals or foreigners.

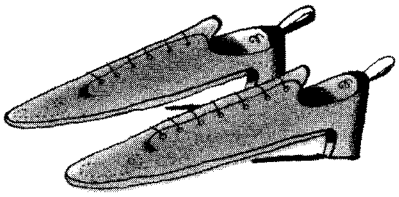
The Soviet political machine, however, was so centralized that it took years of such error and abuse to create an atmosphere in which a coup could occur. Shortly after Khrushchev was removed from power, *Pravda* published an editorial that referred indirectly to his policies as "harebrained," "half-baked," "hasty," "divorced from reality," "bragging and bluster," "attraction to rule by fiat." In fact, this was pretty mild compared with some of the accompanying speeches—and all of it was true.

Perhaps it was necessary to be unreliable and inconsistent in order to emerge from the ideological trap of Stalinism; and then the direction could not be fully reversed. In retirement, Khrushchev was treated harshly by the Brezhnev regime, but Brezhnev failed to prevent him from dictating his memoirs and, eventually, publishing them in the West. The memoirs are vital for Taubman's exhaustively and effectively researched opus, as are countless pages of archival material that has emerged since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Taubman is a voracious researcher, but I only hope, for his sake, that his conscience did not force him to read through all those volumes of Khrushchev's speeches on agriculture. Short of that, he has tapped every available source for this veritable Volga of a book. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

The Gate, *by François Bizot, translated from the French by Euan Cameron (Knopf; $24.95).* In 1971, Bizot, a French anthropologist in Cambodia, was taken captive by the Khmer Rouge and accused of spying. This unsparing memoir recounts his internment in a jungle camp, and his wary friendship with his interrogator—an idealist who later became one of the most notorious torturers of the Cambodian genocide. Bizot's testimony has a rawness unmitigated by time: he excoriates the Americans for their "inexcusable naïveté," and the French for allowing Communist sympathies to blind them to Khmer Rouge atrocities. In 1975, Bizot witnessed the fall of Phnom Penh to the guerrillas, and brokered a deal to evacuate Westerners. In a damning scene, Bizot observes a Frenchman who, crossing the border into Thailand, abandons his Cambodian mistress. As she is beaten by soldiers, her lover watches in silence, "adopting an inquiring look as if to exonerate himself."

The Dante Club, *by Matthew Pearl (Random House; $24.95).* The serial murderer who draws gory inspiration from the torments of Dante's Inferno has cropped up in thrillers before—Michael Dibdin's "A Rich Full Death" and Thomas Harris's "Hannibal"—but Pearl's ingenious notion is to set his début novel in Boston in 1865, when Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, James Russell Lowell, and Oliver Wendell Holmes were translating Dante into English. As they work through the cantos, the Dante-inspired corpses arrive on cue, and the versifiers must turn detective. Pearl, a Harvard graduate and Dante enthusiast, is at his best when discussing "The Divine Comedy" but is less suited to the generic demands of the thriller, which leads to obvious, and gruesome, B-movie plotting. He also has a fine sense of the period, but he overdoes things; the characters cannot walk down the street without tripping over some famous historical personage.



Little Infamies, *by Panos Karnezis (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $24).* These fierce, twisted, and darkly funny stories are set in an unnamed Greek village, in what might be called the eternal present. Karnezis, a Greek writing in English, has a sharp, unsentimental eye for contemporary Greek life, while deftly adding intimations of the pagan past, as when a centaur in a travelling circus demands a raise. The connecting thread here is the spectacular untrustworthiness of the village's inhabitants, who are as wily as Odysseus: Father Yerasimo, the deeply pragmatic priest, engineers a miracle in front of a visiting bishop to impress his congregation; the one-armed Dr. Panteleon finds a loophole in the Hippocratic oath.

Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation, *by Thomas W. Laqueur (Zone; $34).* How did masturbation, arguably the safest sexual act, come to be seen as a moral aberration with ghastly physical effects? Laqueur, a historian at Berkeley, traces this view to the anonymous publication, around 1712, of a tract entitled "Onania." The dangers of onanism became a key concern of Enlightenment thinkers, whose preoccupation with social order made them see this inherently private activity as self-abuse in the most literal sense. (Kant thought that it was worse than suicide.) Laqueur is persuasive, but his belief that masturbation was not a moral problem before the eighteenth century leaves him with a lot of medieval Christian guilt to explain away. An engaging writer, he has a penchant for with-it language—masturbation is both "the first democratic, equal-opportunity would-be vice" and "the crack cocaine of sexuality"—and in the later part of his book he devotes too much attention to transgressive artists whose cultural importance is marginal. His assertion that after the "post-porn" performance art of Annie Sprinkle masturbation "will never be the same" seems, to say the least, unlikely.

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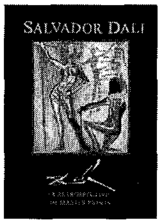

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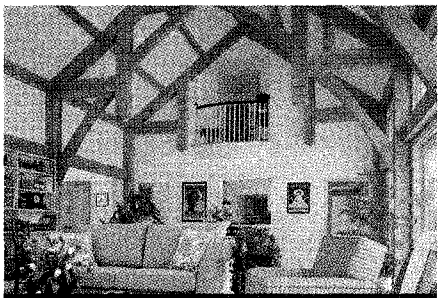

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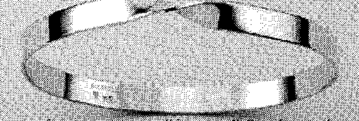

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BOOKS

ONE-WAY STREET

A new novel by Don DeLillo.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

In a land of chunky, garish, anxious-to-please books, Don DeLillo's thirteenth novel, "Cosmopolis" (Scribner; $25), is physically cool, as sleek and silver-touched and palely pure as a white stretch limo, which is in fact the action's main venue. On the front of the book jacket we see the limo from the front, and on the back from the back, and in between stretch a tad more than two hundred tall, generous-margined pages of metafiction. Eric Packer, a twenty-eight-year-old billionaire manager of other people's money, rises after a sleepless night in April of the year 2000, in his forty-eight-room, one-hundred-and-four-million-dollar triplex (with shark tank, borzoi pen, lap pool, gym) at the top of an eighty-nine-story apartment building on First Avenue, and tells his chief of security, "bald and no-necked" Torval, that he wants to get a haircut at the other end of Forty-seventh Street. Their exchange illustrates the terse, deflective, somewhat lobotomized quality of the novel's dialogue:

> "I want a haircut."
> "The president's in town."
> "We don't care. We need a haircut. We need to go crosstown."
> "You will hit traffic that speaks in quarter inches."
> "Just so I know. Which president are we talking about?"
> "United States. Barriers will be set up," he said. "Entire streets deleted from the map."
> "Show me my car," he told the man.

The crosstown epic begins. In its oft-interrupted course, Packer follows, via his limo's bank of electronic screens—"all the flowing symbols and alpine charts, the polychrome numbers pulsing"—the stubborn rise of the yen, on whose fall he has bet heavily. He takes in details of city life ("A man in women's clothing walked seven elegant dogs") and notices that on the limo's spycam his image makes a gesture a second or two before he makes it in reality. This temporal dislocation recurs, indicating an underlying shift in the past-future paradigm. Packer's "chief of theory," Vija Kinski, explains it thus:

> "Computer power eliminates doubt. All doubt rises from past experience. But the past is disappearing. We used to know the past but not the future. This is changing."

DeLillo's post-Christian search for "an order at some deep level" has brought him to global computerization: "the zero-oneness of the world, the digital imperative that defined every breath of the planet's living billions."

The limo, floored in Carrara marble, in its stop-and-go progress admits a coming and going of other passengers, including two advisers who advise Packer to bail out of the yen before he is ruined. Instead, the financier bails out of the limo for a number of quick trysts. He has an impromptu breakfast with "his wife of twenty-two days, Elise Shifrin, a poet who had right of blood to the fabulous Shifrin banking fortune of Europe"; soon thereafter, he copulates with an old acquaintance, an art dealer, and a newer one, a bodyguard, who pop up along his route. On the West Side, where Broadway and Seventh Avenue intersect, Packer runs into a violent demonstration against world capitalism, inspired, it seems, by the line from Zbigniew Herbert, "A rat became the unit of currency," that DeLillo uses as an epigraph for "Cosmopolis." The demonstrators rock the limo, spray-paint it, urinate on it, and hurl a trash can at the rear window. Nevertheless, Packer aloofly reflects within the tormented vehicle that

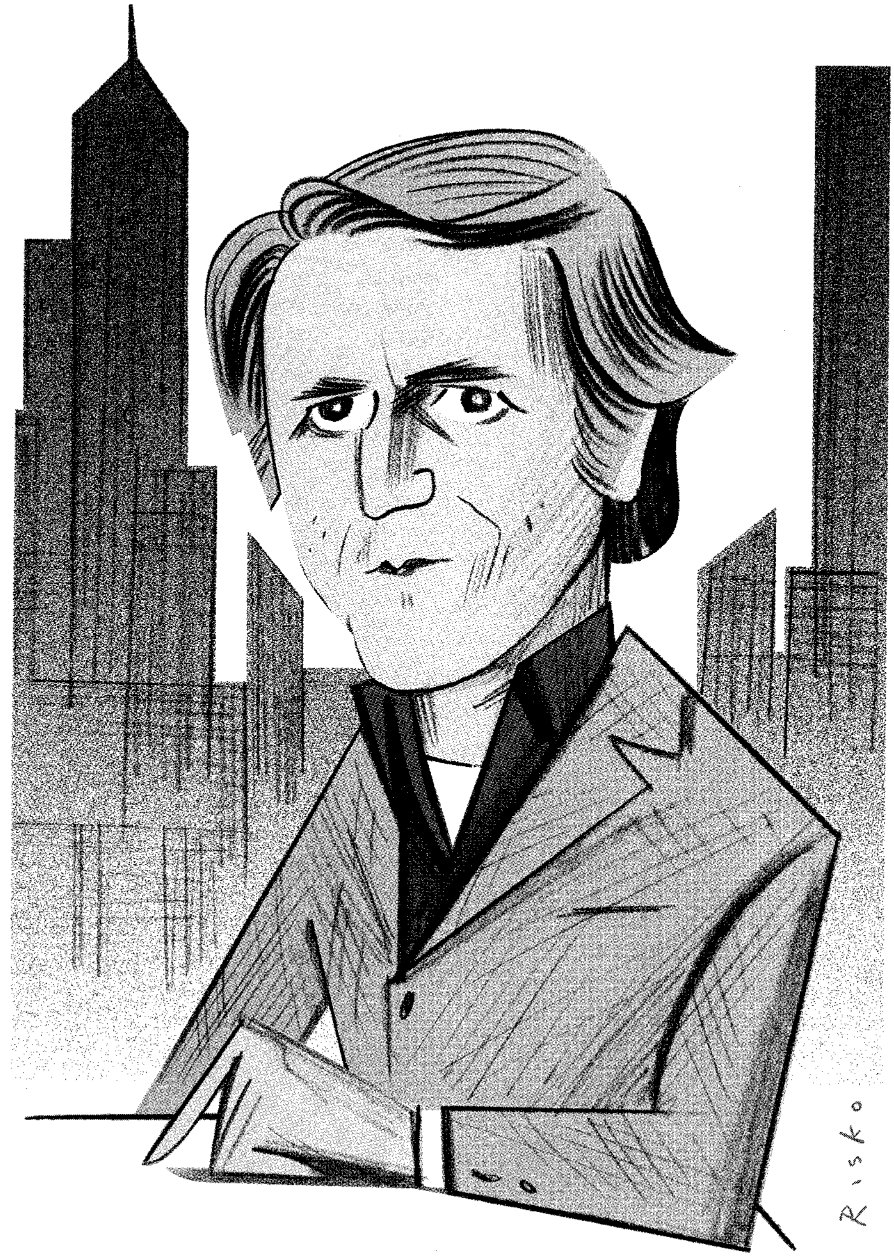
> there was something theatrical about the protest, ingratiating even. . . . There was a shadow of transaction between the demonstrators and the state. The protest was a form of systemic hygiene, purging and lubricating. It attested again, for the ten thousandth time, to the market culture's innovative brilliance, its ability to shape itself to its own flexible ends, absorbing everything around it.

Kinski, the third expert adviser the limo takes aboard—"a small woman in a button-down business shirt, an old embroidered vest and a long pleated skirt of a thousand launderings"—tends to agree, and says of the yen, "To pull back now would not be authentic."

This farce of extravagant wealth and electronic mysticism might feel more authentic from the pen of Kurt Vonnegut or that of Paul Auster, to whom "Cosmopolis" is dedicated. *Nouveau roman* meets Manhattan geography, under sci-fi moonlight. Vonnegut and Auster, however, keep on their fantastic plane undeviatingly, as if there were no other, whereas DeLillo gives signs of wanting to drop us down into the quotidian mundane, where we can be wounded. Though always a concept-driven writer, whose characters spout smart, swift essays at one another, he has shown himself—in large parts of "Underworld," in almost all of "White Noise"—capable of realism's patient surfaces and saturation in personally verified detail. His visionary side, fed by the bleak implausibilities of modern technology and tabloidized popular culture, has often enough enjoyed a counterweight of domestic emotion and common decency. In "White Noise," the surreal supermarkets are the real thing, hilariously familiar, and Jack Gladney's paeans to family life, from within his nest of impudently precocious children and spooky ex-wives, are not ironic. In "Cosmopolis," implausibility reigns unchecked, mounting to a phantasmagoric funeral parade down Ninth Avenue for the Sufi rapper Brutha Fez; on parade are "the mayor and police commissioner in sober profile," a dozen congressmen, "faces from film and TV," foreign dignitaries, "figures of world religion in their robes, cowls, kimonos, sandals and soutanes," break-dancers, nuns in full habit, and whirling dervishes.

Now, a reader undertaking a novel grants the writer a generous initial draft of suspended disbelief. DeLillo spends this advance payment as recklessly as his hero overinvests in loans against the yen. Falling in love, in life and in novels, is an unpredictable business, but what about while you're hunched over having a digital prostate examination in a limo parked in front of the Mercantile Library and at your other end consulting with your chief of finance, lean Jane Melman, sweaty from a jog on her day off? As never before, she and her boss are closely face to face:

> Her mouth was open, showing large gapped teeth. Something passed between them, deeply, a sympathy beyond the standard meanings that also encompassed these meanings, pity, affinity,



In "Cosmopolis," a daylong drive along Forty-seventh Street is funny and metaphoric.

ROBERT RISKO

> tenderness, the whole physiology of neural maneuver, of heartbeat and secretion, some vast sexus of arousal drawing him toward her, complicatedly, with [Dr.] Ingram's finger up his ass.

DeLillo's fervent intelligence and his fastidious, edgy prose, buzzing with expressions like "wave arrays of information," weave halos of import around every event, however far-fetched and random. But the trouble with a tale where anything can happen is that somehow nothing happens. How much should we care about the threatened assassination of a hero as unsympathetic and bizarre as Eric Packer? DeLillo has a fearless reach of empathy; in "Mao II" he tells us just what it's like to be a Moonie, and how the homeless talk. But for what it's like to be a young Master of the Universe read Tom Wolfe instead. DeLillo's sympathies are so much with the poor that his rich man seems a madman. In one of Packer's most outrageous acts of diffident destruction, the money manipulator, responding to his wife's generous offer to help him out of his difficulties with her own fortune, contrives, on a wristwatch computer, to break into her assets and lose them all for her. He even sneers at the amount: "The total in U.S. dollars was seven hundred and thirty-five million. The number seemed puny, a lottery jackpot shared by seventeen postal workers. . . . He tried to be ashamed on her behalf." When he later confesses to her what he has done, she playfully laughs and makes love. She evidently doesn't care, and the reader feels foolish for having cared on her behalf.

Packer, I suppose we should keep in mind, is working through a crisis in self-confidence. His first sexual partner of this busy April day, the art dealer Didi Fancher, tells him, "You're beginning to think it's more interesting to doubt than to act." His would-be murderer, in a conversation so companionable and mutually attuned that murder seems a form of suicide, likens him to "Icarus falling" and tells him, "You did it to yourself." On reflection, Packer has to wonder, "What did he want that was not posthumous?" Death has become his métier.

His Pharaonic limo ride to an underground garage on the far West Side does, however, have a few stops in the world of the living, of the substantially felt. The very notion of a daylong push along Forty-seventh Street is funny and metaphoric—a soul's slow-motion hurtle from the U.N.'s posh environs to the desolation of Hell's Kitchen, with the diamond block between Fifth and Sixth Avenues providing a splash of noontide sparkle. And the notion of a wife wears some shred of the sacred for Packer and DeLillo both; Elise and Eric, though they were estranged from the start, keep meeting, in a series of coincidences that must be fated, and maximize their rapport while lying naked, as movie extras, on the tar surface of Eleventh Avenue. Eric "felt the textural variation of slubs of chewing gum compressed by decades of traffic. He smelled the ground fumes, the oil leaks and rubbery skids, summers of hot tar": the billionaire, "his body . . . a pearly froth of animal fat in some industrial waste," comes home to basic materials.

And he comes home to, it is tempting to reveal, the barbershop of his childhood, where clipped, elliptical DeLillo-diction sounds just right:

> "But how come you're such a stranger lately?"
>
> "Hello, Anthony."
>
> "Long time."
>
> "Long time. I need a haircut."
>
> "You look like what. Get in here so I can look at you. . . . I never seen such ratty hair on a human."

Lulled by the barbershop, its archaic scents and voices, Packer, whose father grew up in a tenement across the street, relaxes his day's work of frenetic self-assertion and falls, for a few blessed moments, asleep. The novel, relaxing likewise, gives us a venue in which we can repose belief. ♦

ON TELEVISION

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Two takes on law enforcement.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

"Without a Trace," CBS's Thursday-night drama about the New York City Missing Persons Squad of the F.B.I., is one of the handful of shows to have emerged during Jerry Bruckheimer's short but impressively productive television career; better known until recently for movies like "Flashdance," "Top Gun," and "Pearl Harbor," Bruckheimer is an executive producer of "C.S.I.: Crime Scene Investigation," "C.S.I.: Miami," the reality show "The Amazing Race," and the *real* reality show "Profiles from the Front Line." I stopped watching "C.S.I." at the beginning of its second season, in the fall of 2001. The lines given to William Petersen, who plays the head of the forensics team, were getting more and more ponderous (you almost expected him to peel off his safety goggles and say, "It wasn't arsenic—it was beauty killed the beast"), and the murders he was trying to solve had become gratuitously grisly, or so it seemed to me in late 2001, when television-as-usual had resumed but life-as-usual had not. But the two shows do offer some of the same satisfactions: by solving crimes that often seem mind-bogglingly mysterious or downright unsolvable, the "C.S.I." team and the Missing Persons Squad of "Without a Trace" create the comforting illusion that competence—having the right tools for the job—will conquer all; they give us a handle on our chaotic, nonsensical world.

Anthony LaPaglia plays the head of the Missing Persons Squad in "Without a Trace."

STEPHEN KRONINGER

"Without a Trace" also happens to have the wonderful actor Anthony LaPaglia, who plays Jack Malone, the head of the unit. LaPaglia, who is forty-four, has an appealingly middle-aged, lived-in face and a grownup bearing; he's like a watchful hunting dog that has learned not to waste any more energy than it has to. Malone seems to do his job just by looking straight into people's faces, and we, in turn, can't stop looking into *his*. His openness seems to hide a mystery, though; part of him is always held in reserve—in a way, he's analogous to the very work he does, in which the known fact that a person is missing coincides with all the unknowns surrounding his or her disappearance.

Although the theme music of "Without a Trace" is frenetic—it's fast, propulsive techno-disco—the show itself, like Malone, moves in small, quiet steps; the agents mark their progress on a whiteboard at the office, noting every painstaking inch forward in their investigation. Sometimes, toward the end, there is a quickening, as they realize where the victim is just as time is running out. But the pace is human. You're never ahead of the agents (unless, perhaps, you happen to be an F.B.I. agent yourself) or behind them; you're right there with them, as they make the wrong assumptions or have a flash of intuition or work out what their first move should be.

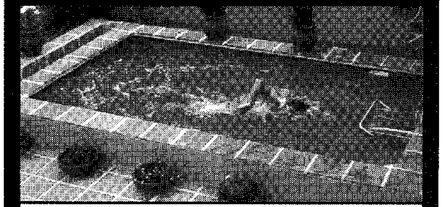
Each episode of "Without a Trace" follows a formula. (Although the endings do vary: some people are missing by choice, it turns out, and not everyone is found alive.) We see the missing person in a flashback, doing whatever he was last seen doing—picking up a boarding pass, talking on a pay phone—and then he vanishes from the screen. The F.B.I. team goes into action, trying to construct a story out of what sometimes seem to be isolated or conflicting pieces of information, because, as Malone says of one case, "Once we find out who she is, odds are we'll find out where she is." But the agents all have stories of their own, too, which affects the way they look at a case. When a Park Avenue businessman disappears before flying home from San Diego, Malone and one of his colleagues, Samantha Spade (I know, I know), who is played by Poppy Montgomery, have different theories about the missing man's motivations. Spade is cynical about men; she says that he's "run from all his obligations, he's lied to everybody he knows." Malone says, "Or he's a middle-class guy who marries a tycoon's daughter, realizes he made a pact with the Devil, and he can't escape." Added to this is the fact that the people the agents talk to often have something to hide and tend to either lie or fail to tell the whole truth, at least the first time around. And then sometimes the definition of truthfulness is hard to pin down; as Malone says of one person whom he and another agent, Martin (Eric Close), have just questioned, "I think he believes what he's saying; whether it's the truth or not is another story."

LaPaglia, who played a similar role in the movie "Lantana," as a policeman investigating a woman's disappearance, exerts a strong centripetal force, which pulls the cast together. He's one of those actors who seem never to make a wrong move. In one scene, when a colleague, Vivian (Marianne Jean-Baptiste), tells Malone that his wife has called, he says flatly, "Thanks," and looks off to the side, not interested in reading Vivian's face to find out the nature of the message; he knows that it can't be good, and, even if you've never seen the show before, you know right away that he has problems at home. After the tragic ending of a later episode, in which a Saudi doctor is killed because of a series of what looked like damning clues but turned out to be horrible misunderstandings, Malone, who had tried to prevent the inevitable, turns from the scene with silent pain and regret as a Bob Dylan song, "Not Dark Yet," plays on the soundtrack. It's the perfect mournful accompaniment to the haunted gravity that Malone brings to the life-or-death job of pulling people out of thin air.

After seeing Michael Chiklis in the emasculated-househusband sitcom "Daddio," a few years ago, I never wanted to see him again; now, watching his sensational performance in the FX police drama "The Shield," I can't get enough of him. Chiklis, who won an Emmy last year for his role in "The Shield" 's first season, is a force of nature in this show—FX's first original series, and one that comes pretty darn close to being as compelling as "The Sopranos." A short, bald battering ram of a man with intense blue eyes, Chiklis plays Vic Mackey, the cocky leader of a strike team in a rough district of Los Angeles. Their job is to "knock down the doors other cops don't want to," and Mackey and his men have found that operating in a gray moral zone works better than playing by the book—meaning they'll make your place look as if Hurricane Andrew stopped by, or beat the stuffing out of you, or even kill you, if that's what they need to do in order to maintain their authority on the street.

"The Shield," which was created by Shawn Ryan, moves at a fast clip—it's the metabolic opposite of "Without a Trace"—and its stimulating speed and grittiness force you, against your better judgment, into cahoots with the charismatic Mackey. You're like the female officer in his precinct who's reluctant to go on seeing him. When did she get morals? Vic cynically asks her. "Always had them," she says. "Sometimes I just lose track." The layers of betrayal and loyalty both inside and outside the precinct house are fascinating. Good cop and bad cop rolled into one, Mackey struts gonadally around the station as if he owned the place—and he does—while his fellow-officers view him with ambivalence or outright contempt. He gives their house a bad rep, but he gets the job done when others can't, and they're torn between using him for their own purposes and trying to take him down. Chiklis has to do a double job of acting, actually—once Mackey starts on the road of corruption, he has to stay busy covering his tracks. At a drug bust, he kills a new strike-team member—who's been planted to get the goods on him—and he makes it look as though the drug dealer did it; then he further deflects blame for the killing by seeming to take responsibility for it, for not having protected his man well enough, and he's shamelessly convincing.

The cast of "The Shield" is remarkable, featuring the glorious CCH Pounder as a no-nonsense fellow-detective, who has only to arch an eyebrow to put criminals (and co-workers) in their place; Jay Karnes, as her hapless partner, who is singled out for Mackey's abuse; and Walton Goggins, as a volatile member of the strike team. Together with Chiklis, they show us exactly how much pressure can be applied to the thin blue line before it snaps. ♦



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THE CURRENT CINEMA

BIG LOSER, SMALL WINNER

"Dreamcatcher" and "Raising Victor Vargas."

BY DAVID DENBY

In "Dreamcatcher," the new big-budget horror film from Warner Bros., based on a novel by Stephen King and directed by Lawrence Kasdan, an abominable worm shows up, the kind of horror-film beast with more teeth than William F. Buckley and an infinite ability to commit mayhem and then reproduce itself. About three feet long, tubular and slithering, the creature enters people's bodies and tears through their guts, or it attacks them from outside, grabbing at their faces, necks, and genitals. All in all, it's not a bad worm, but, of course, we've seen it before. For more than twenty years, we've been seeing it—sometimes as something large and scaly, rearing up and exhaling unspeakable fumes, sometimes in the shape of a chattering mini-dinosaur or an exacerbated gargoyle. "Dreamcatcher" features a lot of snow and four male friends in their thirties, who are held together by a special secret. The snow is pretty, and there's some warmth among the men—a long experience of jokes and banter—but still, in the end, "Dreamcatcher" is an abominable-worm picture. The movie is also an unholy mess, a miserably organized and redundant collection of arbitrary scares and thrills without a unifying visual or poetic idea. A critic has to ask himself why he's sitting there watching it. He feels embedded in junk.

Anyone who complains of the gore in a horror film risks making a fool of himself, since it's precisely the torn flesh, the pullulating matter, the blood, muck, and slime that draws the audience to these movies. For a critic reviewing horror, ridicule is the safest haven, protecting him from the inference that he has any relation at all to what he deplores. Yet if this critic didn't crave sensation of one sort or another, he wouldn't remain in the job, since sensation—rather than emotion—is mainly what big American movies have been handing out in the past decade. So one must discriminate: there are worms and there are worms, and there are good movies and bad made from Stephen King's horror material, including one masterpiece, Brian De Palma's "Carrie"; several pictures with brilliant sequences ("The Shining" and "Misery"); and some that are among the sorriest crud to be released in recent years. King always has his apprehensions of the uncanny, and the premise of "Dreamcatcher" is initially haunting. As boys, the four men (Thomas Jane, Jason Lee, Damian Lewis, and Timothy Olyphant) saved a retarded child, whom they call Duddits, from the wrath of bullies; they made Duddits their friend, and he rewarded them by giving them the power to see things that others cannot see. As grownups, they are held together by the memory of what they did and by their strange powers, which they experience as more of a curse than a blessing.

But the men go off on their annual retreat to a hunting cabin deep in the woods, and at that point the premise begins to crack, and genre tropes take over. It seems that alien creatures have landed, and an American military force, led by a mad colonel (Morgan Freeman), who has chased too many aliens, is out to quarantine the area and destroy the humans who have been infected by the creatures. Far from help, the men can be picked off by the creatures one at a time. Kasdan mounts a few weirdly beautiful moments: bears, elk, and rabbits, mangled by the aliens, run silently out of the snowy woods in frightened herds; a woman sits half dead in the snow, as still

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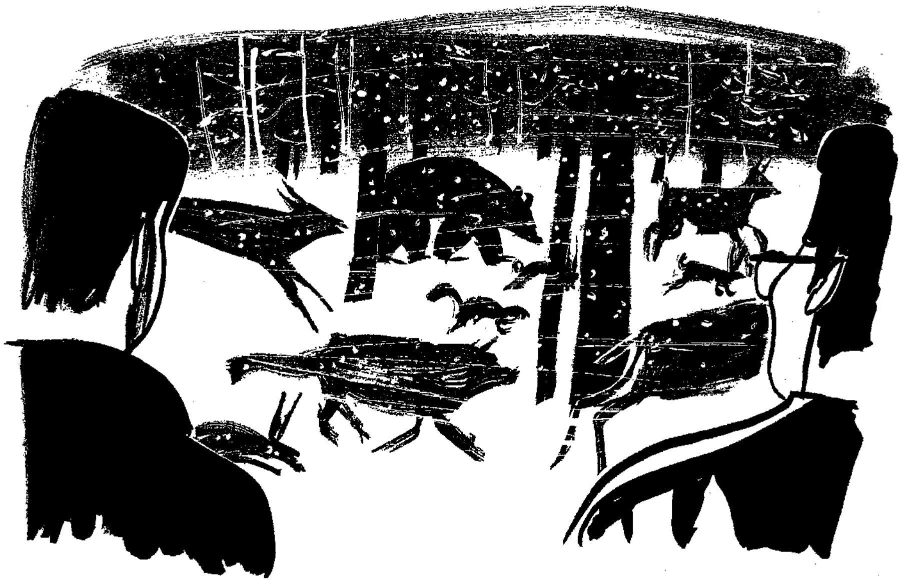
as a golem. But “Dreamcatcher” is too inconsistent and opportunistic to push its ideas more than once or twice into the lyricism that the best horror movies are capable of. Sometimes the creatures kill, sometimes they infect, and sometimes they take over a body, leaving a replicant. It’s as if the filmmakers couldn’t decide which old movies to steal from.

The screenwriter William Goldman, who did the first version of the script, and Kasdan, who revised it, appear to have lost the elementary ability to tell a story straight. The sweet-natured Duddits—now a grown man—is one of the aliens, and he tries to warn his four protectors of the scourge to come. But what is he doing on earth in the first place? Why is he benign when the other creatures are vicious? And what happened to the men’s premonitory skills? Their powers seem to come and go—at key moments, the men don’t have a clue what is going on. Goldman and Kasdan go to elaborate lengths to set up a pattern of joking and rivalry, and then none of the banter plays into the fate of the four friends. Structurally, the movie is a shambles, and its tone is so uncertain that we can’t be sure that Morgan Freeman’s paranoid lines are meant to be satirical. In any case, we laugh every time he opens his mouth. Kasdan, who showed some promise long ago with “The Big Chill,” “The Accidental Tourist,” and “Grand Canyon,” may be turning into a replicant himself. A director who abuses Morgan Freeman doesn’t seem quite human.

Horror filmmaking without poetry or humor is little more these days than a pile of steaming gunk. Incoherent, lazy, and repulsive, “Dreamcatcher,” whose cost has been variously reported as eighty or a hundred and twenty million dollars, is a disgrace. Yet most people will shrug it off as just another bad horror movie. Should it be shrugged off? At what point does the audience respond to slovenliness by staying away? When that happens, at last the worm turns.

At the beginning of “Raising Victor Vargas,” which leads off the New Directors/New Films series at Lincoln Center, on March 26th, and opens in theatres in New York on March 28th, the teen-aged Victor (Victor Rasuk), standing against a wall, pulls off his shirt, flexes, and climbs into bed with an available neighborhood girl. Victor has a large head of dark hair, very bright eyes, and a lean body. An eager, good-looking boy, he’s sure his lips must be moistened to remain kissable. But before this local Casanova can get comfortable with the girl, a friend calls him from the street, and soon heads are popping out of windows. Privacy in this Dominican neighborhood is impossible. It’s summer in lower Manhattan, and Victor is part of a gossipy circle of friends. “Raising Victor Vargas” is a comedy about commonplace mating rituals: everyone is on the prowl, but the neighborhood, with chickens running through alleys, and small gardens stuck among project buildings, is amiable and quiet. These are good kids. On Sunday, Victor, his fluffy-headed kid brother, Nino (Silvestre Rasuk), and his stepsister, Vicki (Krystal Rodriguez), get hauled to church by their pious grandmother (Altagracia Guzman), a loving and peppery old woman who raises the three teens with the certainty that catastrophe waits—teen-age sex, she is convinced, will lead to doom. The grandmother is still old country; she doesn’t get America, where sex usually does not lead to doom. There may be embarrassment or rejection, however. When Victor, a boaster, meets the slender, good-looking Judy (Judy Marte), who is wary of hotshot boys, he has to change his game.



A weirdly beautiful moment in “Dreamcatcher”: animals flee aliens.

TOM BACHTELL

Peter Sollett, the young director of this inexpensively made independent film, grew up in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, but cast the movie with kids from his current neighborhood, the Lower East Side. Sollett asked his amateur cast to read through a script he had been developing, and he incorporated their suggestions, using the new script as a jumping-off point for semi-improvised scenes during actual shooting. Sollett then kept close to his teen actors, who greet the camera as a new friend, with a shy, modest, but exploratory willingness. Sollett doesn’t offer an extreme view of street life; “Raising Victor Vargas” is not the work of an outraged or inspired film poet like Luis Buñuel (“Los Olvidados”) or Héctor Babenco (“Pixote”). It’s not the work of a melodramatist or sitcom director, either. The teens speak in the profane idiom of the New York streets, but the spirit of the movie is candid and gentle, a reflection of the way the kids experience the tensions and pleasures of the mating dance. The boys act cocky even when they feel unsure of themselves; the girls pretend that they don’t need boys. Nothing very important happens, but, moment by moment, the movie is alive with the play of gesture and glances, aggression and withdrawal. “Raising Victor Vargas” is in favor of teen sex without making a big deal about it. Sollett suggests that the Dominican kids, who come from scrambled families with missing parents, need the stability of relationships. With luck, pretty little Victor Vargas will become that commonplace necessity, a man. ♦

BEFORE THE WAR

Seeing his mother coming home
he kneels behind a parked car,
one hand over his mouth to still
his breathing. She passes, climbs
the stairs, and again the street is his.
We're in an American city, Toledo,
sometime in the last century, though
it could be Buffalo or Flint,
the places are the same except
for the names. At eight or nine,
even at eleven, kids are the same,
without an identity, without a soul,
things with bad teeth and bad clothes.
We could give them names, we could
name the mother Gertrude, and give her
a small office job typing bills of lading
eight hours a day, five and a half
days a week. We could give her
dreams of marriage to the boss
who's already married, but we
don't because she loathes him.
It's her son, Sol, she loves,
the one still hiding with one knee
down on the concrete drawing
the day's last heat. He's got feelings.
Young as he is he can feel heat,
cold, pain, just as a dog would
and like a dog he'll answer
to his name. Go ahead, call him,
"Hey, Solly, Solly boy, come here!"
He doesn't bark, he doesn't sit,
he doesn't beg or extend one paw
in a gesture of submission.
He accepts his whole name, even
as a kid he stands and faces us,
just as eleven years from now
he'll stand and face his death
flaming toward him on a bridge-
head at Remagen while Gertrude
goes on typing mechanically
into the falling winter night.

—*Philip Levine*

"Anyone who
has ever
owned a house,
planted a bulb or lost
a lover should
read this book."
—Jay McInerney

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written a warm
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Publishers Weekly,
March 18, 2002

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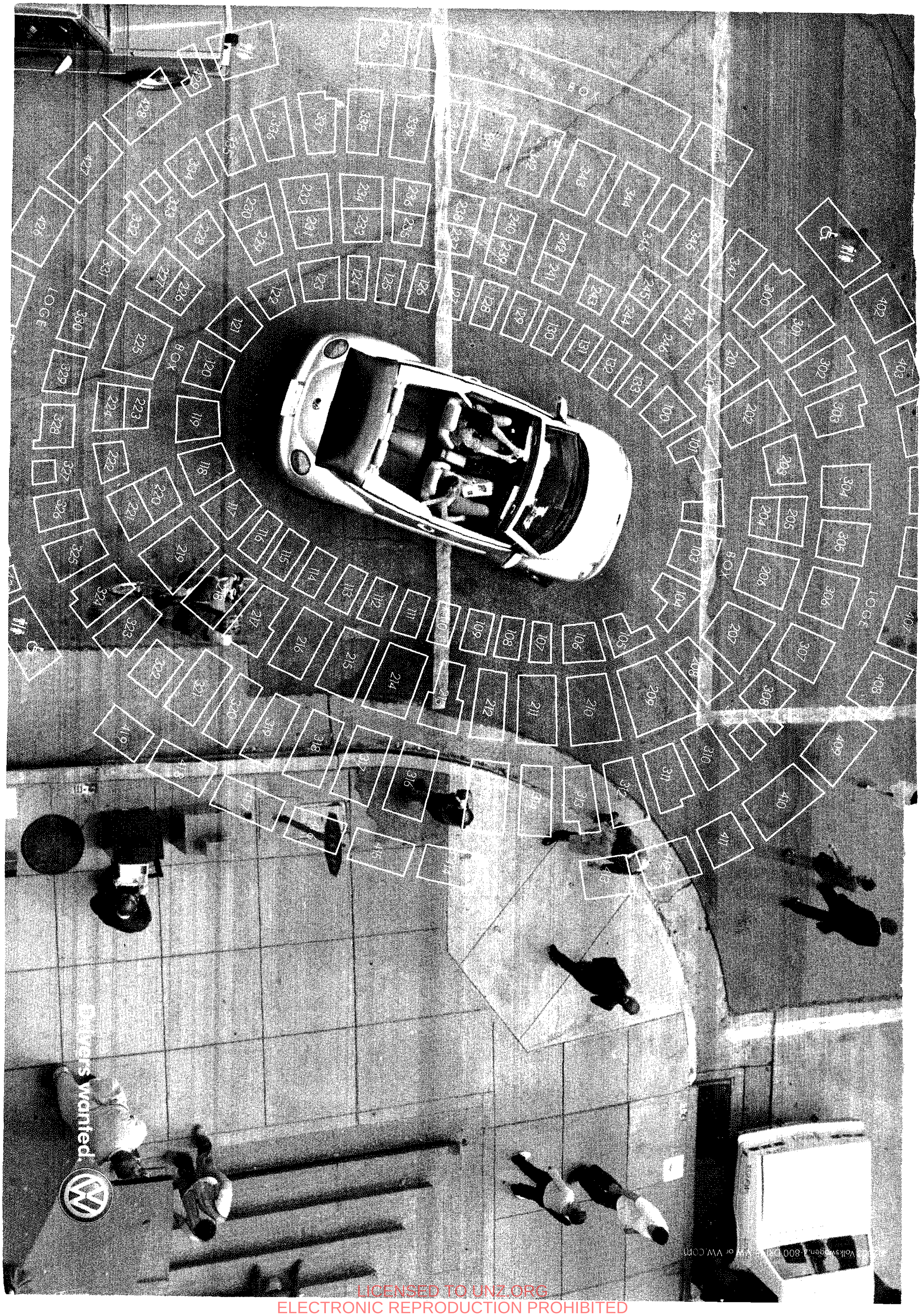
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